
THE EARLY HINDU CIVILISATION

ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT



PUNTHI PUSTAK

CALCUTTA-4



1963

~~2280 (5854)~~

2988

~~2280~~
~~988~~





EARLY HINDU CIVILISATION

EARLY HINDU CIVILISATION

B. C. 2000 TO 320

(BASED ON SANSKRIT LITERATURE)

2280



By
ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT



PUNTHI PUSTAK

CALCUTTA-4 : INDIA

Published by
Sankar Bhattacharya
Punthi-Pustak
136-4B, Cornwallis Street,
Calcutta-4

S.C.E. Bengali

Date 7.5.84

Acc. No. 2988

954.01
DUT

First Edition, London. 1888
Second Revised Edition, (2 vols.)
London, 1893
Third Edition, Calcutta, 1909
Fourth Edition, Calcutta, 1963

Printed by
Kamal Mitra
Mudransree
168, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Road
Calcutta-4

PREFACE

"If I were asked," says Professor Max Muller, "what I consider the most important discovery which has been made during the Nineteenth Century with respect to the ancient history of mankind, I should answer by the following short line :—

"Sanskrit,, DYAUSH PITAR=Greek, ZEUS PATER=Latin, JUPITER=Old Norse, TYR."

And certainly, the discoveries which have been made by European scholars within the last hundred years, with the help of the old Aryan language preserved in India, form one of the most brilliant chapters in the history of the advancement of human knowledge. It is not my intention to give a sketch of that history here ; but a few facts which relate specially to Indian Antiquities may be considered interesting.

It is about a century since Sir William Jones startled the scholars of Europe by his translation of Sakuntala "one of the greatest curiosities," as he said in his preface, "that the literature of Asia has yet brought to light," and one of the tenderest and most beautiful creations of human imagination produced in any age or country. The attention of European literary men was roused to the value and beauty of Sanskrit literature ; and the greatest literary genius of the modern age has recorded his appreciation of the Hindu dramatic piece in lines which have been often quoted, in original and translation :—

"Wouldst thou the life's young blossoms and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is pleased, enraptured, feasted, fed,—
Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sweet name combine ?
I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at once is said."—GOETHE.

Sir William Jones translated Manu, founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and lived to continue his researches into the store-house of Sanskrit literature, and achieved valuable results ; but he did not live to find what he sought,—a clue to India's "ancient history without any mixture of fable." For his enthusiastic labours were mostly confined to the later Sanskrit literature,—the literature of the Post-Buddhist Era ; and he paid little heed to the mine of wealth that lay beyond.

Colebrooke followed in the footsteps of Sir William Jones. He was a mathematician, and was the most careful and accurate Sanscrit scholar that England has ever produced. Ancient Sanscrit literature concealed nothing from his eyes. He gave a careful and accurate account of Hindu philosophy, wrote on Hindu Algebra and Mathematics, and, in 1805, he first made Europeans acquainted with the oldest work of the Hindu and of the Aryan world, viz., the Vedas. Colebrooke, however, failed to grasp the importance of the discovery he had made, and declared that the study of the Vedas "would hardly reward the labour of the reader, much less that of the translator."

Dr. H. H. Wilson followed in the footsteps of Colebrooke ; and although he translated the Rig Veda Sanhita into English, his labours were mostly confined to later Sanscrit literature. He translated into elegant English the best dramatic works in Sanscrit, as well as the beautiful poem of Kalidasa, called "Meghaduta." He also translated the Vishnu Purana, and laboured to adjust the history of the later Hindu Period, and settled many points on a satisfactory basis.

In the meantime, a great genius had arisen in France. The history of Oriental scholarship contains no higher name than that of Burnouf. He traced the connection between the Zend and the Vedic Sanscrit, and framed a Comparative Grammar for his own use before German scholars had written on Comparative Grammar. By such means he deciphered the Zend language and scriptures, elucidated the Rig Veda, and showed its true position in the history of Aryan nations. Versatile as he was profound, he also deciphered the Cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria, and thus earned for himself an undying fame in Europe. And further, in his Introduction to Buddhism, he gave the first philosophical and intelligible account of that great religion. His lessons created a deep sensation in Europe during nearly a quarter of a century (1829-1852), and left a lasting impression on the minds of admiring and enthusiastic pupils in Paris, some of whom, like Roth and Max Muller, have lived to be the profoundest Vedic scholars of our age.

German scholars, in the meantime, had commenced the labours ; and when once they began work in this line, they

soon excelled and even ousted all other labourers in the field of Indian Antiquities ! Rosen, the contemporary and friend of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, published the first Ashtaka of the Rig Veda, with a Latin translation, but his untimely death prevented the further pregress of the work.

But the most eminent German scholars of the day set before themselves a higher task ; and the industry, perseverance, and genius of men like Bopp, Grimm, and Humboldt, soon achieved a result which ranks as one of the noblest and most brilliant discoveries of the century. They marked and traced the connection among all the Indo-European languages—the Sanscrit, the Zend, the Greek, the Latin, the Slav, the Tuton, and the Celtic,—they demonstrated all these languages to be the offshoots of the same original stock, and they even discovered the laws under which words were transformed in passing from one language to another. Classical scholars of the day, who believed that all civilisation and culture began with the Greek and the Latin, at first smiled and ridiculed, then stood aghast, and ultimately gave way with considerable chagrin and anger to the irresistible march of Truth !

The desire to elucidate ancient Hindu literature and history deepened among scholars as they became more thoroughly alive to the value of Sanscrit. Roth, one of the profoundest Vedic scholars of the century, produced his edition of Yaska with his most valuable notes, and later on he published, with Whitney, an edition of the Atharva Veda, and and completed, with Bohtlingk, the most accurate and comprehensive Sanscrit Dictionary yet written. Lassen published his profound work, *Indische Alterhumskunde*, displaying a deep learning and accurate scholarship which has seldom been excelled. Weber published the White Yajur Veda with its Brahmana and Sutras, elucidated many obscure points of Ancient Hindu History in his *Indische Studien*, and gave the first clear and comprehensive account of Sanscrit literature in his *History of Indian Literature*. Benfey published a most valuable edition of the Sama Veda, of which an edition, with translation, had been published by Stevenson and Wilson before. And Muir collected the most suggestive and

historically-valuable texts from Sanscrit literature, in five volumes, which are a monument of his industry and learning.

And lastly, Professor Max Muller mapped out the whole of the ancient Sanscrit literature chronologically in 1859.

More valuable to Hindus than this great work—more valuable than the learned Professor's numerous works and contributions on Language, Religion, and Mythology, is his magnificent edition of the Rig Veda Sanhita, with Sayana's Commentary. The work was hailed in India with gratitude and joy ; it opened to Hindu students generally the great and ancient volume, which had hitherto remained sealed with seven seals to all but a very few scholars ; and it awakened in them a historical interest in the past,—a desire to inquire into their ancient history and ancient faith from original sources.

Jones and Colebrooke and Wilson had worthy successors in India, but none more distinguished than James Prinsep. The inscriptions of Asoka on pillars and rocks all over India had remained unintelligible for over a thousand years, and had defied the skill of Sir William Jones and his successors. James Prinsep, then Secretary to the Asiatic Society, deciphered those inscriptions, and a flood of light was thus thrown on Buddhist antiquities and post-Buddhist history. Prinsep was also the first to deal in a scholar-like way with the coins of the post-Buddhist kings found all over Western India. He has been followed by able scholars. Dr. Haug edited and translated the Aitareya Brahmana and elucidated the history of the Parsis ; Dr. Burnell wrote on South Indian Paleography ; Dr. Buhler has ably dealt with the ancient legal literature ; and Dr. Thibaut has, in late years, discovered Ancient Hindu Geometry.

Among my countrymen, the great reformers, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Sarasvati, turned their attention to ancient Sanscrit literature. They first translated a number of Upanishads into English, and the latter published a translation of the Rig Veda Sanhita in Hindi. Sir Raja Radha Kanta Dev cultivated Sanscrit learning and published a comprehensive and excellent dictionary entitled the Sabdakalpadruma. Dr. Bhao Daji and Professor Bhandarkar, Dr. K. M., Banerjea and Dr. Rajendralala Mitra have, by their varied and

valuable contributions, taken their fair share of work in the field of antiquities. My esteemed friend, Pandit Satyavrata Samasramin has published an excellent edition of the Sama Veda with Sayana's Commentary, and an edition of the White Yajur Veda with Mahidhara's Commentary, and is now engaged in a learned edition of Yaska's Nirukta. and lastly, my learned friend, Mr. Ananda Ram Borooah,¹ of the Bengal Civil Service, has published a handy and excellent English-Sanscrit Dictionary, and is now engaged in a Sanscrit Grammar of formidable size and erudition !

General Cunningham's labours in archæology and in the elucidation of ancient Indian Geography are invaluable ; and Burgess and Fergusson have treated on Indian Architecture. Fergusson's work on the subject is accepted as the standard work.

In Europe, Dr. Fausboll may be said to be the founder of Pali scholarship, and edited the Dhammapada so far back as 1855, and has since edited the Jataka Tales. Dr. Oldenburg has edited the Vinaya texts ; and those scholars as well as Rhys Davids and Max Muller, have now given us an English translation of the most important portions of the Buddhist Scriptures in the invaluable series of Sacred Books of the East.

I wish to say a word about this series, because I am in a special degree indebted to it. Professor Max Muller, who has, by his life-long labours, done more than any living scholar to elucidate ancient Hindu literature and history, has now conceived the noble idea of enabling English readers to go to the fountain-source, and consult Oriental works in a series of faithful translations. More than thirty volumes, translated from the Sanscrit, Chinese, Zend, Pahlavi, Arabic, &c., have already been published, and more volumes are expected. I take this opportunity to own my great indebtedness to the

¹ Since the above lines were written, the author has received the sad intelligence of the death of the talented scholar. His untimely death is a loss to Sanscrit scholarship in this country, which will not be easily remedied. To the present writer, the sorrow is of a personal nature, as he enjoyed the friendship of the deceased for twenty years and more,—since the old College days in this country and in England.

volumes of this series which relate to Indian History. I have freely quoted from them,—allowing myself the liberty of a verbal alteration here and there ; and I have seldom thought it necessary to consult those original Sanscrit works which have been translated in this faithful and valuable series.

And this brings me to the subject of the present work, about which I wish to say a few words. I have often asked myself : Is it possible, with the help that is now available, to write, in a handy work, a clear, historical account of the civilisation of Ancient India, based on ancient Sanscrit literature, and written in a sufficiently popular manner to be acceptable to the general reader ? I never doubted the possibility of such a work ; but I have often wished—even when engaged in this task—that it had been undertaken by an abler scholar, and by one who could devote his attention and time more exclusively to it than I could possibly do.

Scholars who have devoted their lifetime to the study of Indian Antiquities, and who have brought out rich ores from that inexhaustible mine, seem however to have little time or little inclination to coin the metal for the every-day use of the general public. The unambitious task must, therefore, devolve on humbler labourers.

That there is need for such a popular work will not be denied. The Hindu student's knowledge of Indian History practically begins with the date of the Mahommedan Conquest,—the Hindu period is almost a blank to him. The school-boy who knows all about the twelve invasions of Mahmud, knows little of the first invasions and wars of the Aryans, who conquered and settled in the Punjab three thousand years before the Sultan of Ghazni. He has read of Shahab-ud-din, Muhammad Ghori's conquest of Delhi and Kanouj, but has scarcely any historical knowledge of the ancient kingdoms of the Kurus and the Panchalas in the same tract of country. He knows what emperor reigned in Delhi when Sivaji lived and fought, but scarcely knows of the king who ruled in Magadha when Gautama Buddha lived and preached. He is familiar with the history of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur Golkonda, but has scarcely heard of the Andhras, the Guptas, and the Chalukyas. He knows exactly the date of Nadir Shah's invasion of India,

but scarcely knows, within five centuries, the date when the Sakas invaded India, and were repelled by Vikramaditya the Great. He knows more of the dates of Ferdusi and Ferishta than Aryabhatta or Bhavabhuti, and can tell who built the Taj Mahal without having the faintest notion when the topes of Sanchi, the caves of Karli and Ajanta, the temples of Ellora, Bhuvanesvara. and Jagannatha were built.

And yet, such things should not be. For the Hindu student the history of the Hindu Period should not be a blank, nor a confused jumble of historic and legendary names, religious parables, and Epic and Puranic myths. No study has so potent an influence in forming a nation's mind and a nation's character as a critical and careful study of its past history. And it is by such study alone that an unreasoning and superstitious worship of the past is replaced by a legitimate and manly admiration.

It almost seems an irony of fate that the past should be considered a blank in a country where ancient sages have handed down traditions and elaborated compositions through thousands of years, and where, generation after generation, they have preserved the heritage by a feat of memory which is considered a miracle in modern days! In vain must the thousands of ancient Hindu students and scholars have toiled to preserve these works, if the works give us no clue to a general outline History of Ancient India. And in vain, too, must eminent European scholars and antiquarians have worked during the last hundred years, if it be still impossible to put together the results of their learned researches in the shape of a connected history which will be intelligible to the general reader and the ordinary student.

Happily this is no longer impossible. And although many portions of Indian History are still obscure, although many questions of detail are still subjects of controversy, to construct a general history of the Hindu Period is no longer a hopeless task. And, however unfit I feel myself to accomplish this task, I nevertheless, venture to make a commencement, in the hope that abler scholars will pardon my shortcomings, rectify my inevitable errors, and perform skilfully and well what I may do clumsily or leave undone.

In undertaking this great work, I must, once for all disclaim any intention to make any new discoveries, or to extend in any way the limits of Oriental scholarship and research. My limited knowledge of the subject precludes the possibility of such a pretension being advanced, and the limits of the present work make it impossible that any such results should be achieved. I have simply tried to string together, in a methodical order, the results of the labours of abler scholars, in order to produce a readable work for the general reader. If, in the fulfilment of this design, I have been sometimes betrayed into conjectures and suppositions, I can only ask my readers to accept them as such,—not as historical discoveries.

Ten years ago I collected and arranged the materials then available to me, with a view to write a little school-book in my own vernacular; and the little work has since been accepted as a text-book in many schools in Bengal. Since that time I have continued my work in this line, as far as my time permitted; and when, three years ago, I was enabled by the generosity of the Government of Bengal to place a complete Bengali translation of the Rig Veda Sanhita before my countrymen, I felt more than ever impelled to re-arrange the historical materials furnished by our ancient literature in a permanent form. In pursuance of this object, I published some papers, from time to time, in the *Calcutta Review*; and these papers together with all other materials which I have collected, have been embodied and arranged in the present work.

The method on which this work has been written is very simple. My principal object has been to furnish the general reader with a practical and handy work on the Ancient History of India,—not to compose an elaborate work of discussions on Indian Antiquities. To study clearness and conciseness on a subject like this was not, however, an easy task. Every chapter in the present work deals with matters about which long researches have been made, and various opinions have been recorded. It would have afforded some satisfaction to me to have given the history of every controversy, the account of every antiquarian discovery, and the *pros* and *cons* of every opinion advanced. But I could not yield to this temptation without increasing the work to three or four times its present

humble size, and thus sacrificing the very object with which it is written. To carry out my primary object, I have avoided every needless controversy and discussion, and I have tried to explain as clearly, concisely, and distinctly as I was able, each succeeding phase of Hindu civilisation and Hindu life in ancient times.

But, while conciseness has been the main object of the present work, I have also endeavoured to tell my story so that it may leave some distinct memories on my readers after they have closed the work. For this reason, I have avoided details as far as possible, and tried to develop, fully and clearly, the leading facts and features of each succeeding age. Repetition has not been avoided, where such repetition seemed necessary to impress on my readers the cardinal facts—the salient features of the story of Hindu civilization.

The very copious extracts which I have given (in translation) from the Sanscrit works may, at first sight, seem to be inconsistent with my desire for conciseness. Such extracts, however, have been advisedly given. In the first place, on a subject where there is so much room for difference of opinion, it is of the highest importance to furnish the reader with the text on which my conclusions are based, to enable him to form his own judgment, and to rectify my mistakes if my conclusions are erroneous. In the second place, it is a gain in the cause of historical knowledge to familiarize the reader with the texts of our ancient authors. It is scarcely to be hoped that the busy student will spend much of his time in reading the ancient and abstruse works in the original or even in learned translations, and the historian who seeks to familiarize his readers with some portions at least of those ancient works, adds in so far to the accurate knowledge of his readers on this subject. And lastly, it has been well said, that thought is language, and language is thought. And if it be the intention of the historian to convey an idea of ancient thought,—of what the ancient Hindus felt and believed,—he cannot do this better than by quoting the words by which that ancient people expressed themselves. Such brief extracts very often give the modern readers a far more realistic and intimate knowledge of ancient Hindu society and manners and ways of thinking

than any account that I could give at twice the length. And it is because I have desired the modern reader to enter into the spirit and the inner life of the ancient Hindus, that I have tried to bring the old composers of hymns and sutras face to face with the reader, and allowed them to speak for themselves. Such an intimate grasp of the inner life and feelings of the ancients is the very kernel of true historical knowledge, and I have felt it a hopeless task to impart this knowledge more accurately or more concisely than in the words of ancients. It is for this reason mainly, and consistently with my anxiety to be concise, that I have quoted copiously from ancient works.

In conclusion, I have to crave the indulgence of the reader for the many deficiencies which he will, no doubt, find in the present work, written in moments stolen from official work, and in places where decent library was never available. Such claim to indulgence is seldom admitted, and the reader very pertinently inquires why a writer should ever undertake a work for which he was not in every way fully equipped. Nevertheless, I mention these circumstances, as they may explain, if they cannot justify, the shortcomings of the work. The time of the present writer is not his own, and the charge of a Bengal District with an area of over six thousand square miles and a population of over three millions, leaves little leisure for other work. To arrange my materials, under these circumstances, has been an arduous work, and I can only ask the indulgent consideration of my readers for any errors and defects which may have crept into this work.

R. C. DUTT.

MYMENSING DISTRICT BENGAL,
13th August 1888.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Based on data drawn copiously from Sanscrit sources, this volume is a verbatim reprint of Book I, II and partially Book III of Dutt's famous book *A History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, a pioneer work on the subject which saw the light of day towards the close of the 19th century.

It deals with the Vedic, Epic and Rationalistic Periods of Ancient India from B. C. 2000 to 320, and dwells upon the races and cultures of the early Hindus—their literature, social life and religious doctrines—as envisaged in the Vedas, Upanishadas, Puranas, Dharma Shastras, Srutis and Smritis.

The publisher has strictly adhered to the original text, except that it has been found necessary to make slight changes in the spelling of proper names here and there according to the modern standard.

It is needless to add that, as a fair-minded historian and critic Dutt comes out well in all that he writes about early Hindu civilisation, and disentangles the confused history of Ancient India of the first few centuries with much success, considering the extreme difficulties of the subject.

It is an invaluable source-book of authoritative information, a class by itself, opening out new paths for students of historical researches and providing ample material for stimulating thought on a subject which should make a special appeal to our countrymen at the present moment.

This work will be followed by a companion volume, *Later Hindu Civilisation*.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION—EPOCHS AND DATES	i
BOOK I	
Vedic Period, B. C. 2000 to 1400	
CHAP.	
I. The Indo-Aryans : Their Literature	23
II. Agriculture, Pasture, and Commerce	30
III. Food, Clothing and the Arts of Peace	37
IV. Wars and Dissensions	43
V. Social Life	53
VI. Vedic Religion	67
VII. Vedic Rishis	88
BOOK II	
Epic Period, B. C. 1400 to 1000	
I. Literature of the Period	96
II. Kurus and Panchalas	108
III. Vedehas, Kosalas and Kasis	118
IV. Aryans and Non-Aryans	130
V. Caste	136
VI. Social Life	145
VII. Law, Astronomy and Learning	155
VIII. Sacrificial Rites of the Brahmins	161
IX. Religious Doctrines of the Upanishads	170
BOOK III	
Rationalistic Period, B. C. 1000 to 320	
I. Literature of the Period	178
II. Expansion of the Hindus	188
III. Administration, Agriculture and Arts	198
IV. Laws	206
V. Caste	219
VI. Social Life	227
VII. Geometry and Grammar	240
VIII. Sankhya and Yoga	246
IX. Naya and Vaishesika	258
X. Purava Mimansa and Vedanta	264



INTRODUCTION

EPOCHS AND DATES

The History of Ancient India is a history of thirty centuries of human culture and progress, It divides itself into several distinct periods, each of which, for length of years, will compare with the entire history of many a modern people.

Other nations claim an equal or even a higher antiquity than the Hindus. Egyptian scholars have claimed a date over four thousand years B.C. for the foundation of the first Egyptian dynasty of kings, Assyrian scholars have claimed a date over three thousand years B.C. for Saragon I., who united Sumir and Accad under the Semetic rule; and they claim a still earlier date for the native Turanian civilisation of Accad which preceded the Semetic conquest of Chaldea. The Chinese claim to have an authentic history of dynasties and facts from about 2400 B.C. For India, modern scholars have not claimed an earlier date than 2000 B.C. for hymns of the Rig Veda, although Hindu civilisation must have been centuries or thousands of years old when these hymns were composed.

But there is a difference between the records of the Hindus and the records of other nations. The hieroglyphic records of the ancient Egyptians yield little information beyond the names of kings and pyramid-builders, and accounts of dynasties and wars. The cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria and Babylon tell us much the same story. And even ancient Chinese records shed little light on the gradual progress of human culture and civilisation.

Ancient Hindu works are of a different character. If they are defective in some respects, as they undoubtedly are, they are defective as accounts of dynasties, of wars, of so-called historical incidents. On the other hand, they give us a full, connected, and clear account of the advancement of civilisation, of the progress of the human mind, such as we shall seek for in vain among the records of any other equally ancient nation. The literature of each period is a perfect picture—a photograph, if we may so call it—of the Hindu civilisation of

that period. And the works of successive periods form a complete history of ancient Hindu civilisation for three thousand years, so full, so clear, that he who runs may read.

Inscriptions on stone and tablets, and writings on papyri are recorded with a design to commemorate passing events. The songs and hymns and religious effusions of a people are an unconscious and true reflection of its civilisation and its thought. The earliest effusions of the Hindus were not recorded in writing,—they are, therefore, full and unrestricted,—they are a natural and true expression of the nation's thoughts and feelings. They were preserved, not on stone, but in the faithful memory of the people, who handed down the great heritage from century to century with a scrupulous exactitude which, in modern days, would be considered a miracle.

Scholars who have studied the Vedic hymns historically are aware that the materials they afford for constructing a history of civilisation are fuller and truer than any accounts which could have been recorded on stone or papyri. And those who have pursued Hindu literature through the different periods of ancient Hindu history, are equally aware that they form a complete and comprehensive story of the progress and gradual modifications of Hindu civilisation, thought, and religion through three thousand years. And the philosophical historian of human civilisation need not be a Hindu to think that the Hindus have preserved the fullest, the clearest and the truest materials for his work.

We wish not to be misunderstood. We have made the foregoing remarks simply with a view to remove the very common and very erroneous impression that Ancient India has no history worth studying, no connected and reliable chronicle of the past which would be interesting or instructive to the modern reader.

Ancient India has a connected story to tell, and so far from being uninteresting, its special feature is its intense attractiveness. We read in that ancient story how a gifted Aryan people, separated by circumstances from the outside world, worked out their civilisation amidst natural and climatic conditions which were peculiarly favourable. We note their intellectual discoveries age after age; we watch

their religious progress and developments through successive centuries ; we mark their political career, as they gradually expand over India, and found new kindoms and dynasties ; we observe their struggles against priestly domination, their successes and their failures ; we study with interest their great social and religious revolutions and their far-reaching consequences. And this great story of a nation's intellectual life—more thrilling in its interest than any tale which Shaharzadi told—is nowhere broken and nowhere disconnected. The great causes which led to great social and religious changes are manifest to the reader, and he follows the gradual development of ancient Hindu civilisation through thirty centuries, from 2000 B.C. to 1000 years after Christ,

The very shortcomings of Hindu civilisation, as compared with the younger civilisation of Greece or Rome, have their lessons for the modern reader. The story of our successes is not more instructive than the story of our failures. The hymns of Visvamisra, the philosophy of Kapila, and the poetry of Kalidasa have no higher lessons for the modern reader than the decadence of our political life and the ascendancy of priests. The story of the religious rising of the people under the leadership of Gautama Buddha and Asoka is not more instructive than the absence of any efforts after popular freedom. And the great heights to which the genius of Brahmans and Kshatriyas soared in the infancy of the world's intellectual life are not more suggestive and not more instructive than the absence of genius in the people at large in their ordinary pursuits and trades,—in mechanical inventions and maritime discoveries, in sculpture, architecture, and arts, in manifestations of popular life and the assertion of popular power.

The history of the intellectual and religious life of the ancient Hindus is matchless in its continuity, its fulness, and its philosophical truth. But the historian who only paints the current of that intellectual life performs half his duty. There is another and a sadder portion of Hindu history,—and it is necessary that this portion of the story, too, should be faithfully told.

We have said before that the history of Ancient India

divides itself into several distinct and long periods or epochs. Each of these periods has a distinct literature, and each has civilisation peculiar to it, which modified itself into the civilisation of the next period under the operation of great political and social causes. It is desirable that we should, at the outset, give a brief account of these historical epochs and the great historical events by which they are marked. Such an outline-account of the different periods will make our readers acquainted with the plan and scope of this work, and will probably help them to grasp more effectually the details of each period when we come to treat them more fully. We begin with the earliest period, viz., that of Aryan settlements in the Punjab. The hymns of the Rig Veda furnish us with the materials for a history of this period.

FIRST EPOCH

In this priceless volume, the Rig Veda, we find the Hindu Aryans as conquerors and settlers on the banks of the Indus and its five branches ; and India beyond the Sutlej was almost unknown to them. They were a conquering race, full of the self-assertion and vigour of a young national life, with a strong love of action and a capacity for active enjoyments. They were, in this respect, far removed from the contemplative and passive Hindus of later days ; they rejoiced in wealth and cattle and pasture-fields ; and they carved out, with their strong right arm, new possessions and realms from the aborigines of the soil, who vainly struggled to maintain their own against the invincible conquerors. Thus, the period was one of wars and conquests against the aborigines ; and the Aryan victors triumphantly boast of their conquests in their hymns, and implore their gods to bestow on them wealth and new possessions, and to destroy the barbarians. Whatever was bright and cheerful and glorious in the aspects of nature struck the Aryans with admiration and gladness, and such manifestations of nature were worshipped and invoked as gods.

It is needless to say that the entire body of Aryans was then a united community, and the only distinction of castes was between the Aryans and the aborigines. Even the distinc-

tion between professions was not very marked ; and the sturdy lord of many acres, who ploughed his fields and owned large herds in time of peace, went out to defend his village or plunder the aborigines in times of war, and often composed spirited hymns to the martial gods in his hours of devotion. There were no temples and no idols ; each patriarch of a family lighted the sacrificial fire in his own hearth, and offered milk and rice offerings, or animals, or libations of the Soma juice to the fire, and invoked the "bright" gods for blessings and health and wealth for himself and his children. Chiefs of tribes were kings, and had professional priests to perform sacrifices and utter hymns for them ; but there was no priestly caste, and no royal caste. The people were free, enjoying the freedom which belongs to vigorous pastoral and agricultural tribes.

What is the date of this period of Aryan settlements in the Punjab as pictured in the Rig Veda ? We think we agree with the general opinion on the subject when we fix 2000 to 1400 B.C. for this first period of Hindu history. And, for the sake of convenience, we will call this period the *Vedic Period*.

SECOND EPOCH

When once the Hindu Aryans had come as far as the Sutlej, they did not lose much time in crossing that river and pouring down in numbers in the valley of the Ganges. We have rare mention of the Ganges and the Jumna in the Rig Veda, showing that they were not yet generally known to the Hindus in the first or Vedic Period, although adventurous colonists must have issued out of the Punjab and settled in the shores of those distant rivers. Such settlements must have multiplied in the second period, until, in the course of some centuries, the entire valley of the Ganges, as far down as modern Tirhut, were the seats of powerful kingdoms and nationalities, who cultivated science and literature in their schools of learning, and developed new forms of religion and of civilisation widely different from those of the Vedic Period.

Among the nations who flourished in the Gangetic valley, the most renowned have left their names in the epic literature

of India. The Kurus had their kingdom round about modern Delhi. The Panchalas settled further to the south-east, round about modern Kanouj. The Kosalas occupied the spacious country between the Ganges and the Gunduck, which includes modern Oudh ; the Videhas lived beyond the Gunduck, in what is now known as Tirhut ; and the Kasis settled down round about modern Benares. These were the most renowned nations of the second period, though other less powerful nationalities also flourished and extended their kingdoms from time to time.

When the first Kurus and Panchalas settled in the Doab, they gave indications of a vigorous national life, and their internecine wars form the subject of the first National Epic of India, the Mahabharata. And, although this work, in its present shape, is the production of a later age—or rather of later ages—yet, even in its present form, it preserves indications of that rude and sturdy vigour and warlike jealousies which characterised the early conquerors of the Gangetic valley. The Hindus did not, however, live many centuries in the soft climate of this valley before losing their vigour and manliness, as they gained in learning and civilisation. As they drifted down the river they manifested less and less of the vigour of conquering races. The royal courts of the Videhas and the Kasis were learned and enlightened, but contemporary literature does not bear witness to their warlike qualities. The Kosalas, too, were a polished nation, but the traditions of that nation, preserved in the second National Epic of India, the Ramayana (in its present form, a production of later ages), show more devotion to social and domestic duties, obedience to priests, and regard for religious forms, than the sturdy valour and the fiery jealousies of the Mahabharata.

This gradual enervation of the Hindus was the cause of the most important results in religious and social rules. Religion changed its spirit. The manly but simple hymns with which the sturdy conquerors of the Punjab had invoked nature-gods scarcely commended themselves to the more effete and more ceremonious Hindus of the Gangetic valley. The hymns were still repeated, but lost their meaning and sense, and vast ceremonies and observances took the place of simple forms.

The priestly class increased in number and in influence, until they formed a hereditary caste of their own. The kings and warriors of the Gangetic valley lived in more splendid courts, and had more gorgeous surroundings than the simple agricultural warriors of the Punjab, and soon separated themselves from the people and formed a caste of their own. The mass of the people—the Vaisyas or Visas of the Rig Veda—became more feeble than their forefathers in the Punjab, and wore, without a protest, the chains which priests and warriors—the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas—threw around them. And as subjection means demoralisation, the people in Hindu kingdoms never afterwards became what the people in ancient and modern Europe have striven to be. And lastly, the aborigines who were subjugated and had adopted the Aryan civilisation formed the low caste of Sudras, and were declared unfit to perform the Aryan religious rites or to acquire religious knowledge.

Such was the origin of the Caste-system in India, in the second period of Hindu history. The system arose out of weakness and lifelessness among the people, and, to a certain extent, it has perpetuated that weakness ever after.

It will be observed that this Second Period was a period of the submission of the people under the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, and of the submission of the Kshatriyas themselves under the Brahmans. At the close of the period, however, there appears to have been a reaction, and the proud Kshatriyas at last tried to prove their equality with the Brahmans in learning and religious culture. Wearied with the unmeaning rituals and ceremonials prescribed by priests, the Kshatriyas started new speculation and bold inquiries after the truth. The effort was unavailing. The priests remained supreme. But the vigorous speculations which the Kshatriyas started form the only redeeming portion of the inane and lifeless literature of this period. And these speculations remained as a heritage of the nation, and formed the nucleus of the Hindu philosophical systems and religious revolutions of a later day.

It was in this period of Aryan expansion in the Gangetic valley that the Rig Veda and the three other Vedas—Saman, Yajus, and Atharvan—were finally arranged and compiled.

Then followed another class of compositions known as the Brahmanas, and devoted to sacrificial rites ; and these inane and verbose compositions reflect the enervation of the people and the dogmatic pretensions of the priests of the age. The custom of retirement from the world into forest life, which was unknown in the earlier ages, sprang up and the last portions of the Brahmanas are Aranyakas devoted to forest rites. And lastly, the bold speculations started by Kshatriyas are known as the Upanishads, and form the last portions of the literature of this period, and close the so-called *Revealed Literature of India*.

Scholars have generally held that a period of at least four or five centuries was required for the great social and political changes of this epoch. Within this period the valley of the Ganges, as far as Tirhoot, was cleared, colonised, and Hinduised, and formed into sites of powerful kingdoms. Religious observances were vastly elaborated ; social rules were changed ; the caste-system was formed ; the supremacy of priests was established and confirmed, and ultimately questioned by the Kshatriyas ; and lastly, within this age, a varied and voluminous literature was recorded. The Period may, therefore, be supposed to have extended approximately from 1400 to 1000 B.C.

One or two facts may be cited here which confirm these dates. The central historical fact of this period was a great war between the Kurus and the Panchalas, which forms the subject of the Mahabharata, and of which we shall have something to say further on. The central literary fact of this period was the compilation of the Vedas. Tradition and the Epic itself inform us that the compiler of the Vedas was a contemporary of the war ; but we may accept or reject this as we like. We will examine these two facts separately.

First, with regard to the compilation of the Vedas. Tradition has it that when the Vedas were compiled, the position of the solstitial points was observed and recorded to mark the date. The Jyotisha in which this observation is now found is a late work, not earlier than the third century before Christ, but the observation was certainly made at an ancient date, and Bentley and Archdeacon Pratt—both able mathemati-

cians—have gone over the calculation and found that it was made in 1181 B.C.

Much has been written of late against the value of this discovery in Europe, America, and India, but we have found nothing in these discussions which goes against the genuineness of the astronomical observation. We are inclined to believe that the observation marks approximately the true date of the final compilation of the Vedas; and as the work of compilation occupied numerous teachers for generations together, we may suppose that the Vedas were compiled during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. And this date falls within the period which we have assigned for the Second Epoch.

Next, with regard to the Kuru-Panchala War. The annals of different kingdoms in India allude to this ancient war, and some of these annals are not unreliable. The founder of Buddhism lived in the sixth century B.C., and we learn from the annals of Magadha that thirty-five kings reigned between the Kuru-Panchala War and the time of Buddha. Allowing twenty years to each reign, this would place the war in the thirteenth century B.C.

Again, we know from coins that Kanishka ruled in Kashmir in the first century A. D., and his successor Abhimanyu probably reigned towards the close of that century. The historian of Kashmir informs us that fifty-two kings reigned for 1266 years from the time of the Kuru-Panchala War to the time of Abhimanyu, and this would place the war in the twelfth century B. C.

We do not ask the reader to accept any of the particular dates given above. It is almost impossible to fix any precise date in the History of India before Alexander the Great visited the land; and we may well hesitate, even when astronomical calculations point to a particular year, or historical lists point to a particular century. All that we ask, and all that we are entitled to ask, is that the reader will now find it possible to accept the fact that the Vedas were finally compiled and the Kuru-Panchala War was fought sometime about the thirteenth century or the twelfth century B. C.

And, if the Kuru-Panchala War was fought in the thirteenth

century B. C. (i. e., about a century before the Trojan War), it is impossible to fix a date later than 1400 B. C. for the commencement of the Second Epoch of which we are speaking. For at the time of the Kuru-Panchala War, the tracts of country round modern Delhi and Kanouj were the seats of powerful nations who had developed a civilisation and literature of their own. And two centuries must be allowed between the date when the Aryans issued out of the Punjab and the date when these results had been achieved in the Gangetic valley.

To accept 1400 B. C. as the date when the Aryans issued out of the Punjab, is to confirm the dates we have given (2000 1400 B. C.) for the First Epoch, the Vedic Period.

Again, many of the Brahmanas contain internal evidence that they were composed at the time or after the time of the Kurus and the Panchalas. We may, therefore, suppose these to have been composed in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B. C. And the Upanishads, which mark the close of Brahmana literature, were composed about the eleventh century B. C. Janaka, the king of the Videhas, gave a start to the Upanishads ; we may, therefore, suppose the Videhas and the Kosalas to have flourished about 1200 to 1000 B. C., as the Kurus and the Panchalas flourished about 1400 to 1200 B. C.

For the sake of convenience we will call this second period the *Epic Period*. It was the period when the nations described in the national epics of India lived and fought ; when the Kurus and the Panchalas, the Kosalas and the Videhas, held sway along the valley of the Ganges.

THIRD EPOCH

The Third Epoch is, perhaps, the most brilliant period of Hindu history. It was in this period that the Aryans issued out of the Gangetic valley, spread themselves far and wide, and introduced Hindu civilisation and founded Hindu kingdoms as far as the southernmost limits of India. Magadha or South Behar, which was already known to the Hindus in the Epic Period, was completely Hinduised in the Third Epoch ; and the young and powerful kingdom founded here soon

eclipsed all the ancient kingdoms of the Gāngetic valley. Buddhism spread from Magadha to surrounding kingdoms, and Chandragupta, the contemporary of Alexander the Great, brought the whole of Northern India, from the Punjab to Behar, under the rule of Magadha. With this great political event, viz., the consolidation of all Northern India under one great empire, the Third Epoch ends and the Fourth Epoch begins.

Aryan colonists penetrated to Bengal and introduced Hindu religion and civilisation among the aborigines. The kingdoms founded in the south won greater distinction. The Andhras founded a powerful kingdom in the Deccan, and developed great schools of learning. Further south, the Aryans came in contact with the old Dravidian civilisation. The more perfect Hindu civilisation prevailed, and the Dravidians were Hinduised and founded kingdoms which became distinguished for learning and power. The three sister-kingdoms of the Cholas, the Cheras, and the Pandyas made their mark before the third century B. C., and Kanchi (Conjeveram), the capital of the Cholas, distinguished itself as the seat of Hindu learning at a later day.

In the west the Saurashtras (including Gujrat and the Mahratta country) received Hindu civilisation; while, beyond a strip of the sea, Ceylon was discovered, and formed a great resort of Hindu traders.

The practical and enterprising spirit of the age shows itself in literature as well as in territorial conquests. The whole of the verbose teachings and rites of the Brahmanas and Aranyakas were condensed into Sutras or aphorisms so as to form handy manuals for the sacrifice. Other Sutras were framed for laying down the rules of domestic rites and social conduct. Sutra schools sprang all over India, in the north and in the south, and works multiplied. And besides these religious works, phonetics, metre, grammar, and lexicons were studied, and Yaska wrote his Nirukta, and Panini his Vyakarana early in this period. And the construction of sacrificial altars according to fixed rules gave rise to geometry, which was first discovered in India.

And, lastly, the lessons of the Upanishads were not lost.

The bold speculations started in these works were pursued, until Kapila started the Sankhya philosophy—the first closely-reasoned system of mental philosophy known in the world. Other systems of philosophy were started by other thinkers, but the Sankhya philosophy was destined to have the greatest influence on the future of India ; for Gautama Buddha was born in the sixth century B. C., and he added to the cold logic of the Sankhya philosophy a world-embracing sympathy and love for mankind which had made his religion the religion of a third of the human race.

We have no difficulty in fixing the dates of this epoch. Chandragupta, the contemporary of Alexander the Great, united Northern India in 320 B. C. We may, therefore, date the Third Epoch from 1000 B. C. to 320 B. C. For the sake of convenience, we will call it the *Philosophical or Rationalistic Period*.

The great political, literary, and religious incidents of the period require the wide space of seven centuries that we have allotted to the epoch ; and all the facts that we know confirm these dates. The dates which Buhler has given to the Sutras of Gautama, Baudhayana, Vasishtha, and Apastamba fall within the limits given above. Thibaut assigns the eighth century to the Sulva Sutras or geometry. Writers on Sankhya philosophy assign the seventh century to Kapila's philosophy, and Gautama Buddha lived, as we know, in the sixth century.

These dates, which have been ascertained with tolerable certainty, confirm the dates which we have accepted for the previous or the Epic Period. For, if the philosophy of Kapila, which was a distant and matured result of the Upanishads, was started in the seventh century, the Upanishads themselves must have been composed several centuries earlier. And we are presumably correct in assigning B. C. 1000 for the Upanishads,—the works which closed the Epic Period.

FOURTH EPOCH

The epoch begins with the brilliant reign of Chandragupta. His grandson Asoka the Great made Buddhism the state religion of India, settled the Buddhist Scriptures in the great council of Patna, and published his edicts of humanity on stone

pillars and on rocks. He prohibited the slaughter of animals, provided medical aid to men and cattle all over his empire, proclaimed the duties of citizens and members of families, and directed Buddhist missionaries to proceed to the ends of the earth, to mix with the rich and the poor, and to proclaim the truth. His inscriptions show that he made treaties with Antiochus of Syria, Ptolemy of Egypt, Antigonus of Macedon, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epiros, and sent missionaries to these kingdoms to preach the Buddhist religion. "Both here and in foreign countries," says Asoka, "everywhere the people follow the doctrine of the religion of the Beloved of the Gods, wheresoever it reacheth." "Buddhist missionaries," says a Christian writer,¹ "preached in Syria two centuries before the teaching of Christ (which has so many moral points in common) was heard in Northern Palestine. So true is it that every great historical change has had its forerunner."

The Maurya dynasty, which commenced with Asoka's grandfather Chandragupta about 320 B. C., did not last very long after the time of Asoka. It was followed by two short-lived dynasties, the Sunga and the Kanva (183 to 26 B. C.), and then the great Andhras, who had founded a powerful empire in the South, conquered Magadha and were masters of Northern India for four centuries and a half, B. C. 26 to A. D. 430. They were generally Buddhists, but respected Brahmans and orthodox Hindus; and throughout the Buddhist Epoch, the two religions flourished in India side by side, and persecution was almost unknown. The Andhras were followed by the great Gupta emperors, who were supreme in India till about 500 A. D., and then their power was overthrown. The Guptas were generally orthodox Hindus, but favoured Buddhism also, and made grants to Buddhist churches and monasteries.

In the meantime Western India was the scene of continual foreign invasions. The Greeks of Bactria, expelled by Turanian invaders, entered India in the second and first centuries before Christ, founded kingdoms, introduced Greek civilisation and knowledge, and had varied fortunes in different parts of

¹ Mahaffy, "Alexander's Empire," chapter xiii.

India for centuries after. They are said to have penetrated as far as Orissa. The Turanians of the Yu-Chi tribe next invaded India, and gave a powerful dynasty to Kashmir; and Kanishka the Yu-Chi king of Kashmir had an extensive empire in the first century A. D., which stretched from Kabul and Kashgar and Yarkand to Gujerat and Agra. He was a Buddhist, and held a great council of the Northern Buddhists in Kashmir. The Cambojians and other tribes of Kabul then poured into India, and were in their turn followed by the locust-hordes of the Huns, who spread over Western India in the fifth century A. D. India had no rest from foreign invasions for several centuries after the time of Asoka the Great; but the invaders, as they finally settled down in India, adopted the Buddhist religion and formed a part of the people.

Buddhism gradually declined during the centuries after the Christian Era, much in the same way as the Hinduism of the Rig Veda had gradually declined in the Epic Period when the Hindus had settled down in the Gangetic valley. Buddhist monks formed a vast and unmanageable body of priesthood, owning vast acres of land attached to each monastery, and depending on the resources of the people; and Buddhist ceremonials and forms bordered more and more on Buddha-worship and idolatry. Many of these forms and ceremonials, which were dear to the common people, were adopted by the Hinduism of the day, and thus a new form of Hinduism asserted itself by the sixth century after Christ. An effete form of Buddhism lingered on for some centuries in some parts of India after this, until it was stamped out by the Mahomedan conquerors of India.

We find an uninterrupted series of Buddhist rock-cut caves, chaityas or churches, and viharas or monasteries, all over India, dating from the time of Asoka to the fifth century A. D., but there are scarcely any specimens of Buddhist architecture of a later date. Temple-building and Hindu architecture flourished from the sixth century A. D. to long after the Mahomedan conquest.

The most valuable portions of Buddhist literature left to us are the scriptures as finally settled in the Council of Patna

by Asoka, and sent by him all over India. These scriptures, preserved in the Pali language beyond in Ceylon, from our best materials for the history of early Buddhism, while later forms of this literature have been found in Nepal, in Thibet, in China, in Japan, and in all Northern Buddhist countries.

We have said that Buddhism had a marked effect on Hinduism. Buddhism had questioned the sacredness of the Vedas, and modern or Puranic Hinduism, though nominally revering the Vedas, shows a complete estrangement and emancipation from those ancient works. Hindu astronomy, mathematics, laws, and philosophical speculations had sprung from the Vedas and the Vedic sacrifices, and belonged to different Vedic schools. But Hindu science and learning of the post-Buddhist age have no reliance on the Vedas and do not belong to any Vedic school. Puranic Hinduism is not a religion of Vedic sacrifices, but of the worship of images and gods unknown to the Vedas.

The Code of Manu represents Hindu thought and manners of the Buddhist Epoch. It is based on the ancient Dharma-sutras or social laws of the philosophical Period ; but while the Dharmasutras belong to different Vedic schools, Manu's Sanhita knows of no Vedic schools and professes to be the law for all Aryans. On the other hand Manu adheres to the Vedic sacrifices, eschews image-worship, and does not know of the Trinity of Puranic Hinduism. Thus Manu marks the transition stage from Vedic Hinduism to Puranic Hinduism.

For reasons which will appear from the foregoing remarks, we date the fourth or *Buddhist Period* from 320 B.C. to 500 A.D.

FIFTH EPOCH

The fifth or last epoch of Hindu history is the epoch of Hindu revival, and covers five centuries from 500 A.D. to 1000 A.D. the date of the first invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni.

The period begins with great deeds in politics and literature. Foreign invaders had harassed India for centuries before, and at last a great avenger arose. Vikramaditya the great, of Ujjayin, was the master of Northern India ; he beat back the invaders known as the Sakas in the great battle of Korur, and

asserted Hindu independence. Hindu genius and literature revived under his auspices, and a new form of Hinduism asserted itself.

The three centuries commencing with the time of Vikramaditya the great (500 to 800 A.D.) may be called the Augustan era of later Sanscrit literature, and nearly all the great works which are popular in India to this day belong to this period. Kalidasa wrote his matchless dramas and poems in Vikrama's court. Amara Sinha, the lexicographer, was another of the "nine gems" of this court. And Bharavi was Kalidasa's contemporary or lived shortly after. Siladitya II., a successor of Vikramaditya, ruled from 610 to 650 A.D. and is the reputed author of Ratnavali. Dandin, the author of Dasakumara Charita, was an old man when Siladitya II. reigned, and Banabhatta, the author of Kadambari, lived in his court. Subandhu, the author of Vasavadatta, also lived at the same time; and there are reasons to believe that the Bhattikavya was composed by Bhartrihari, the author of the Satakas, in the same reign.

In the next century Yasovarman ruled between 700 and 750 A.D., and the renowned Bhavabhuti composed his powerful dramas in this reign. Bhavabhuti, however, was the last of the galaxy of the poets and literary men of ancient India,—and no great literary genius arose in India after the eighth century.

It was in this Augustan era also that the great national epics of India, the production of many ages, received their last additions and touches, and assumed their final shape; and the voluminous Puranas, which have given their name to this period, began to be composed in their present shape.

In modern Hindu science, too, we have the brightest names in these three centuries. Aryabhatta, the founder of modern Hindu astronomy, was born in 476 A.D.; and produced his work early in the sixth century. Varahamihira, his successor, was one of the "nine gems" of Vikrama's court. Brahmagupta was born in 598 A.D., and was, therefore, a contemporary of Banabhatta, the novelist. Other astronomers of note also lived about the sixth century.

This brilliant period of three centuries (500 to 800 A.D.)

was followed by two centuries of impenetrable darkness ! The history of Northern India from 800 to 1000 A.D. is a perfect blank. No great dynasties rose to power, no literary or scientific men rose to renown, no great work of architecture or art was constructed in Northern India. History is silent over these two dead centuries !

But we have indications of what was transpiring. The two dark centuries witnessed the fall of ancient dynasties, and the crumbling down of ancient kingdoms and nationalities. They resemble the dark ages of Europe, which witnessed the fall of the Roman power, and which cleared up when Feudal power arose. In India, too, the power of ancient races and dynasties was silently swept away during the period of darkness, and when light breaks in again, we see a new race of Hindu Feudal barons as the masters of India,—the modern Rajputs ! In the general dissolution of ancient power and the struggle for supremacy, the youngest and the most vigorous race came to the forefront, and about 1000 A.D., we find Rajput dynasties ruling everywhere in Northern India. They inherited the throne of Vikramaditya and his successors in Ujjayini and Kanouj ; they usurped the power of the powerful Bullabhi kings of Gujerat and Western India ; they ruled Bengal and the Deccan ; and they tried to oppose the progress of Sabaktagin and Mahmud in the Punjab.

Different theories have been put forward as to the origin of the Rajputs. H. H. Wilson and other authorities maintain that they were descended from the Scythian invaders of India who poured in through successive centuries, who were once beaten back by Vikramaditya the Great, but who, like other invaders, settled down in the deserts of Western India, and ruled and conquered when they could. Be that as it may, the Rajputs certainly appear to have been new converts to Hindu civilisation, for there is no mention of them in older records. Like all new converts, they espoused Hinduism with exceptional zeal ; they were proud to be styled Kshatriyas,—descended from the Solar and Lunar races ; and wherever they conquered, Hindu temples arose. Priestly monopoly in its closest form and the unhealthiest restrictions of modern Hinduism date from this period, and were perpetuated during

the seven centuries of national lifelessness under the Musalman rule.

It is impossible not to be struck with the resemblance between European history and Indian history at the period which marks the close of the Ancient Age. The efforts of Vikramaditya to beat back the Sakas have a close resemblance to the efforts of the last Roman Emperors and armies to keep back the hordes of barbarians who pressed eagerly forward for conquests. For centuries the Hindus and the Romans succeeded ; but the waves of invasion and conquest at last overwhelmed the ancient empires in India and in Italy, and marked the fall of ancient thrones and institutions ! For centuries after this event, Western Europe and Northern India have scarcely any history ; or the history is one of violence and wars which closed the Ancient Age and ushered in the Modern Age ! When, at last, the darkness clears up, we find a new feudal power in Europe, and a new feudal power in India. And the new dynasties of Europe had embraced Christianity, and exerted as zealously and enthusiastically for the mediæval priests, as the newly-converted Rajputs did for the Brahmans and the modern form of Hinduism.

But the parallel does not end here. The new masters of India had to fight as hard against the waves of Mohommedan invasion as the new master of Europe did in France, in Spain, and in Syria. Rechard the Lionhearted was fighting at the same period as Prithu Rai of Delhi, and against the same rising power. In Europe the Christian barons saved their independence, and ultimately expelled the Musalmans even from Spain ; in India the Hindu barons struggled and fell. Shaha-buddin Ghori overthrew the Rajput kingdoms of Delhi and Ajmere, Kanouj and Benares, in 1193 and 1194 A.D., and the boldest of the Rajputs retreated to their desert fastnesses, where they enjoy a sort of independence to the present day, through the generous sufferance of the British Government.

We have dated the Fifth or *Puranic Period* from 500 A.D. to 1000 A.D., but from what has been stated above it will appear that the Puranic Age really ends at 800 A.D. The history of Ancient India terminates at that date, and is followed by two centuries of Dark Age.

DATES

There are two Eras prevalent in India, viz. *Samvat Era*, running from 56 B.C., and the *Sakabda Era*, running from 78 A.D. Scholars have experienced the greatest difficulty in finding out what great events these Eras really commemorate; and the conclusions arrived at are not yet beyond the pale of controversy.

It has been now ascertained that the Sakabda or Saka Era is the Era of the Saka king Kanishka, who conquered Kashmir and Western India in the first century after Christ, and spread Buddhism over neighbouring countries. Thus the Sakabda was originally a Buddhist Era. It was adopted in Buddhist India, and it was known and used in all Buddhist countries—in Thibet and Burma, in Ceylon and Java. It was after the Hindu revival of the sixth century that the date was adopted by Hindus, and the story was added, that the Era marked, not the reign of a Buddhist Saka king, but the defeat of the Sakas by a Hindu king. But wherever the Era is cited by ancient writers, it is cited as the Era of the Saka king;² and to the present day the Era is known in our almanacs as the Sakabda, or more fully as *Saka Narapater Atitabada*, which means the Era of the Saka king, not the Era of the destruction of the Sakas by a Hindu king.

The Samvat Era is still more perplexing. Popularly it is known as the Era of a great victory of Vikramaditya. But history knows of no Vikramaditya of Ujjayini in 56 B.C., and it is pretty certain, that Vikramaditya the Great, the parton of Kalidasa, lived in the sixth century after Christ.

2 The exceedingly careful and observant scholar, Colebrooke, pointed out seventy years ago, that the astronomer, Varahamihira, who lived in the six century A.D., cited the Saka Era as the *Saka Bhupa Kala* or *Sakendra Kala*, i. e., the Era of the Saka king. His commentator explains this as the Era when the barbarians called Sakas "were discomfited by Vikramaditya." Again, the astronomer Brahmagupta, who flourished in the seventh century A.D., cites the Era as *Saka Nripante*, i. e., after the Saka king. His commentator explains this as "after the reign of Vikramaditya, who slew a people of barbarians called Sakas."—Colebrooke's Algebra, &c., from the Sanskrit, p. xliii. London, 1817.

It is still more curious that the Samvat Era has come into use in comparatively recent times, No instance has yet been discovered of the use of this Era in the centuries immediately after the Christian Era. No trace of this Era is found in the inscriptions of the Buddhist Period in India, or in other Buddhist countries,—Thibet and Burma, Ceylon and Java.

There certainly seems to be some mystery about the Samvat Era, 56 B.C. It pretends to commemorate a victory of a king of whom history knows nothing ; and it is an Era which does not seem to have been used in the numerous inscriptions of India for several centuries after it pretends to have been established.

Probably the true origin of the Era has been discovered by Fleet in his volume on the inscriptions of the Gupta kings. It would seem that the Era was originally an obscure Era of the Malava tribe, and came subsequently to be connected with the name of Vikramaditya, who in the sixth century after Christ raised the Malavas to the rank of the first nation in India.

We now proceed, for facility of reference, to give a table of dates for the different Epochs, premising, that the dates should be taken as only approximately correct, and that the earlier dates are supposed to be correct only within two or three centuries.

EPOCH I—VEDIC PERIOD, B. C. 2000 to 1400

Aryan settlement in the Indus valley	...	} B.C. 2000 to 1400
Composition of the Rig Veda hymns	...	

EPOCH II.—EPIC PERIOD, B. C. 1400 1000.

Aryan settlements in the Ganges valley	...	B.C. 1400 to 1000
Lunar Zodiac fixed. Astronomical observations	}	B.C. 1400 to 1200
Compilations of the Vedas		
Flourishing Period of the Kurus and the Panchalas		B.C. 1400 to 1200
Kuru-Panchala War	...	B.C. 1250
Flourishing Period of the Kosalas, the Kasis, and the Videhas	}	B.C. 1200 to 1000
Composition of the Brahmanas and Aranyakas		
Composition of the Upanishads	...	B.C. 1300 to 1100
	...	B.C. 1100 to 1000

Date 7.5.84

Acc. No. 2988
DATES

21

EPOCH III.—RATIONALISTIC PERIOD, B. C. 1000 to 320.

Aryan Conquest of all India	... B.C. 1000 to 320
Yaska	... B.C. 9th century.
Panini	... B.C. 8th century.
Sutra Schools	... B. C. 800 to 400
Sulva Sutras (Geometry)	... B. C. 8th century.
Kapila and Sankhya Philosophy	... B. C. 7th century.
Other Schools of Philosophy	... { B.C. 600 to Chris tian Era
Gautama Buddha	... B. C. 557 to 477
Bimbisara, King of Magadha	... B. C. 537 to 485
Ajatasatru " "	... B. C. 485 to 453
First Buddhist Council	... B. C. 477
Second Buddhist Council	... B. C. 377
Nine Nandas, Kings of Magadha	... B. C. 370 to 320

EPOCH IV.—BUDDHIST PERIOD, B. C. 320 to A. D. 500

Chandragupta, King of Magadha	... B. C. 320 to 290
Bindusara, King of Magadha	... B. C. 290 to 260
Asoka, King of Magadha	... B. C. 260 to 222
Third Buddhist Council	... B. C. 242
The Maurya Dynasty in Magadha ends	... B. C. 183
The Sunga Dynasty in Magadha	... B. C. 183 to 71
The Kanva Dynasty in Magadha	... B. C. 71 to 26
The Andhra Dynasty in Magadha	... B.C. 26 A.D. 430
The Gupta Emperors	... A.D. 300 to 500
The Bactrian Greeks invaded India	... { B.C. 2nd and 1st centuries.
The Yu-Chi invaded India	... A.D. 1st century.
Kanishka, the Yu-Chi King of Kashmir, founded the Saka Era	... { A. D. 78
The Shah Kings ruled in Saurashtra	... A. D. 150 to 300
The Cambojians invaded India	... { A. D. 3rd and 4th centuries.
The White Huns invaded India	... A. D. 5th century

EPOCH V.—PURANIC PERIOD, A. D. 500 to 1000

Vikramaditya of Ujjayini and Northern India	... A. D. 500 to 550
Kalidasa, Amarasinha, Vararuchi, &c.	... A. D. 500 to 550
Bharavi, about	... A. D. 550 to 600
Aryabhatta, founder of modern Hindn Astronomy	... A. D. 476 to 530
Varahamihira	... A. D. 500 to 550

29880

Brahmagupta	... A. D. 598 to 650
Siladitya II., Emperor of Northern India	... A. D. 610 to 650
Dandin	... A. D. 570 to 620
Banabhatta and Subandhu	... } A. D. 610 to 650
Bhartrihari and the Bhattikavya	
Bhavabhuti	... A. D. 700 to 750
Sankaracharya	... A. D. 788 to 850
The Dark Ages in Northern India	... A. D. 800 to 1000

BOOK I

VEDIC PERIOD, B.C. 2000 TO B.C. 1400

CHAPTER I

THE INDO-ARYANS—THEIR LITERATURE

The site of the early home of the Aryans¹ has been a subject of endless controversies among scholars. Enthusiastic and patriotic Hindu scholars will not admit that the first home of the Aryans was anywhere outside India ; while equally patriotic European scholars would place the seat of the primitive Aryans on the shores of the Baltic Sea. We need hardly say that it is not our object to enter into this discussion ; and we merely repeat here the theory of many moderate thinkers that the early home of the Aryans was somewhere in Central Asia.

The main arguments on which this conclusion is based have been summed up by Max Muller in a recent work, and we quote them for our readers :—

“Firstly, we have two streams of language, one tending south-east to India, and the other north-west to Europe. The point where these two streams naturally intersect, points to Asia.

“Secondly, the earliest centres of civilised life were in Asia.” And we may add that the most primitive form of all Aryan languages—the nearest approach to that language which was spoken by the primitive Aryan races—is the Vedic Sanskrit of Ancient India.

1 Recent anthropological researches have disclosed that the nations speaking Aryan languages are not descended from the same stock, and never belonged to the same race. At the same time it is admitted that the ancestors of these races must have derived their languages from a common source ; they must have been subject to one great race which imposed its language on them, or lived in one common tract of country. When we speak of the early home of the Aryans we mean this common country ; and when we speak of Aryans, we mean races speaking Aryan languages.

"Thirdly, we see in later times large ethnic waves, rising from Central Asia and overwhelming Europe. Such are the Huns in the fourth and the Mongols in the thirteenth century,

"Fourthly, if the migration had taken place from Europe to Asia, particularly from Scandinavia, we should naturally look in the common Aryan language for a number of words connected with maritime life." But this is not the case. While we find common names for particular animals and birds, and even common names for animals (*pasu*) and birds (*vi*) in general, we find no names for special fishes, and no general name for fish, nor even is there a common name of the sea !

Various pictures, more or less imaginary, of the civilisation of the early Aryans before they separated have been drawn by various scholars from the slender materials of the words which are found in common use among the different Aryan nations in the world. Pictet's work in two large volumes, published in Paris in 1859-63, created a wider interest than any preceding attempt of a similar nature ; and this was followed by Dr. Fick's work in 1868, and Dr. Hehn's work in 1870. It is not our intention to draw such pictures here ; we will only give a few facts about the life of the primitive Aryans about which there is no dispute.

The domestic economy among the early Aryans was much the same as it is among the Aryan nations of the present day. The historian of man does not find in Aryan history any traces of Hetairism (or of promiscuous relationship between the sexes), of families being reckoned on the mother's side, or of inheritance by the female line. On the contrary, the father was the protector and the nourisher of the family, the mother looked after and fed the children, the daughter milked the cattle, and relationship by marriage was recognised. Probably the primitive Aryans had already reached a higher state of civilisation than promiscuous living would imply. The family, and not the tribe, was the unit of society ; and the father was the head of the family.

Many of the useful animals had been domesticated and brought under the service of man. The cow, the bull, the ox, the sheep, the goat, the swine, the dog, and the horse had all been domesticated. The wild bear, the wolf, the hare, and

the dreaded serpent were known. Similarly among birds, the goose, the duck, the cuckoo, the raven, the quail, the crane, and the owl were well known to the early Aryans.

The various industries were still in their infancy ; but a commencement in manufactures and arts had been made. The Aryans built houses, villages, and towns, made roads, and constructed boats for communication by water or for a humble kind of trade. Weaving, spinning, and plaiting were known, and furs, skins, and woollen fabrics were made into garments. Carpentry must have made considerable progress, and dyeing was known.

It need scarcely be stated that agriculture was practised by the primitive Aryans, and it was this occupation which probably gave them their name (*Arya* = cultivator). Many words familiar to cultivators, like the plough, the waggon, the cart, the wheel, the axle, the yoke, in common use among the Aryan nations, point to the same primitive roots from which they have been derived. Corn was ground, prepared, and cooked in various ways ; while the flocks of sheep and cows by which every family was surrounded afforded milk and meat. There can be little doubt that, although agriculture was largely resorted to, many patriarchs of families used also to rove about from place to place with their attendants and flocks in search of new pastures, and a fairly large portion of the early Aryans led a nomad life. Of this we have some trace even in the Rig Veda, as we shall see farther on.

War was not infrequent in those primitive times, and weapons of bone and of wood, of stone and of metals, were known. The bow and the arrow, the sword and the spear seem to have been the weapons of war.

It argues some advance in civilisation that the use of gold and of silver was undoubtedly known to the early Aryans ; and with the simplicity of early races, they called gold by the name "yellow" and silver by the name "white." A third metal (*ayas*) was also known, but it is doubtful if it was iron.

It is perhaps impossible to conjecture the sort of government which obtained in those olden days. Patriarchs of tribes and leaders of men undoubtedly obtained ascendancy, and the simple subjects looked up to them and called them the

protectors or nourishers of men, or the shining chief (*Pati*, *Vispati*, *Raja*) in war as well as in peace. The natural feelings of civilised man distinguished between right and wrong, and custom and a vague perception of what was good for the nation had the force of law.

And lastly, the primitive religion of the Aryans was suggested by whatever was beautiful and striking in the phenomena of Nature. The sky or the bright sky was an eternal object of wonder and of worship. The sun, the dawn, the fire, and the earth, the storms and the clouds and the thunder, all received worship. But religion was still simple and archaic. Myths and legends about the gods and their relationship had not yet multiplied; elaborate rites and ceremonials had not yet been fabricated. The bold forefathers of the Aryan nations looked up with a manly veneration to whatever was wondrous and beautiful in Nature, imagined such manifestations as instinct with deity, and offered their praise and their prayers with a grateful and fervent heart.

Adventurous bands of Aryans left their primitive home from time to time in quest of food or pasture, of kingdoms or plunder. The exact order in which the different nations left has not been ascertained, and will never be ascertained. Max Muller holds that the first division of the Aryan races was into two branches, viz. the North-Western or European, and the South-Eastern or Asiatic; and that, after they became once separated, the two branches never met again. The North-Western branch travelled towards Europe; and five distinct races occupied five different portions of Europe at periods which cannot be ascertained. The Celts settled, or were more probably driven onwards by other races to settle in the extreme west of Europe, in France, Ireland, Great Britain, and Belgium; the robust Tutons settled in northern and central Europe, from which they issued after the downfall of Rome to conquer the whole of Europe; the Slavs settled in eastern Europe, i.e., in Russia and other places; and the Italic and Greek races settled in the south of Europe.

The Asiatic branch travelled southwards, and according to Max Muller, the still undivided Indo-Iranians came as far as the Indus, to the land of the five rivers, or the Punjab.

Here, "within sight of the Indus and its tributaries, the undivided South-Eastern Aryans spoke a language more primitive than the Sanscrit or Zend." Religious schism then separated them; the worshippers of the Devas or the Hindus remained in the Punjab, the worshippers of the Asuras or the Iranians went away to Persia.

It is the worshippers of the Devas—the Hindu Aryans—who have composed those hymns which are known as the Rig Veda, and we will say a few words here about this ancient work. Probably there is not another work in the literature of mankind which is so deeply interesting, so unique in the lessons it imparts. The hoary antiquity of this ancient work, the picture it affords of the earliest form of civilisation that the Aryans developed in any part of the world, and the flood of light it throws on the origin of the myths and religions of all Aryan nations,—make the Rig Veda deeply interesting.

But the work has a yet higher import, a deeper significance. To the philosophical historian of man the Rig Veda discloses the origin of religious faith and religious feelings. It explains how the mind of man in its infancy worships what is bright and glorious in nature, what is powerful and striking. Among less happy nations, religion began with the dread of diseases and of evils, as these made the most lasting impression on the mind. But among the Aryans, the brighter and pleasanter aspects of nature,—the bright sky, the blushing dawn, the rising sun, and the glowing fire,—created the deepest impression, and called forth songs of gratitude and praise and worship. This is the Rig Veda Samhita,—this is the earliest form of Aryan religion known.

But the Rig Veda is more than this. It shows us how the mind is led from Nature up to Nature's God. For the sages of the Rig Veda do not always remain satisfied with the worship of the manifestations of Nature; they sometimes soar higher, and dare to conceive that all these phenomena—the sun, the sky, the storms, and the thunder—are but the actions of the Unknowable One.

And if such is the value of the Rig Veda to the historian of man, its value to the historian of Aryan nations is still greater. It is the oldest work in the Aryan world. It gives

us a picture of the oldest civilisation which the Aryans developed in any part of the world. And as we have said before, if enlightens and clears up much that is dark and obscure in the religions and myths of Aryan nations all over the world. It would be entirely foreign to our present object to illustrate this by instances, but some instances are so well known as to merely require a mention to illustrate our views,

Zeus or Jupiter is the Vedic Dyu, or the sky ; and Daphne and Athena are probably the Vedic Dahana and Ahana, the dawn. Uranus is Varuna, the sky ; and probably Prometheus is the Vedic Pramantha, the fire which is produced by friction.

To the Hindus the Rig Veda is a work of still higher importance. It explains the whole fabric of the later Hindu religion ; it clears all the complications of later mythology ; it throws light on the history of the Hindu mind from its earliest stage of infancy. The Hindu learns from this ancient and priceless volume that Vishnu the supreme preserver, and his three steps covering the universe, mean the sun at its rise, its zenith, and its setting ; that the terrible god Rudra the supreme destroyer originally meant the thunder or thunder-cloud ; and that Brahma the supreme creator was originally prayer or the god of prayer.

The Rig Veda consists of 1028 hymns, comprising over ten thousand verses. The hymns are generally simple, and betray a child-like and simple faith in the gods, to whom sacrifices are offered, and libations of the Soma juice are poured, and who are asked for increase of progeny, cattle, and wealth, and implored to help the Aryans in their still doubtful struggle against the black aborigines of the Punjab.

The hymns of the Rig Veda are divided into ten Mandalas or Books, and with the exception of the first and last books, every one of the remaining eight books contains hymns said to have been composed or rather proclaimed by one Rishi,—by which we may understand one family or line of teachers. Thus the second book is by Gritsamada ; the third is by Visvamitra ; the fourth is by Bamadeva ; the fifth is by Atri ; the sixth is by Bharadvaja ; the seventh is by Vasishtha ; the eighth is by Kanva ; and the ninth is by Angiras. The first book contains 191 hymns, which, with scattered exceptions,

are composed by fifteen Rishis ; and the tenth book also contains 191 hymns, which are mostly ascribed to fictitious authors.

The hymns of the Rig Veda were handed down from father to son, or from teacher to pupil for centuries together, and it was in a later age, in the Epic Period, that they were arranged and compiled. The whole, or greater portion of the tenth book, seems to have been the production of this later period, but was thrown in and preserved with the body of the older hymns.

The arrangement and compilation of the Rig Veda hymns in their present shape must have been completed within the Epic Period. In Aitareya Aranyaka II, 2, we have fanciful derivations given of the names of the Rishis of the Rig Veda in the order in which the Mandalas are arranged. And this is followed by an account of a Sukta or hymn, of a Rik or verse, of a half Rik, of a Pada or word, and of an Akshara or syllable. The Rig Veda Sanhita, therefore, had not only been arranged Mandala by Mandala, but had been carefully divided, subdivided, and analysed within the Epic Period.

By the close of the Epic Period, every verse, every word, every syllable of the Rig Veda had been counted. The number of verses, as computed, varies from 10,402 to 10,622, that of words is 153,826, that of syllables 432,000.

CHAPTER II

AGRICULTURE, PASTURE, AND COMMERCE

The main industry of the ancient Hindus, as of the modern Hindus, was agriculture ; and as might be expected, we have frequent allusions to it in the Rig Veda. The very name Arya, by which the Aryan conquerors of India have distinguished themselves from the aborigines or Dasas, is said to come from a root which means to cultivate. Max Muller believes that traces of this root are to be found in the names of many Aryan countries, from Iran or Persia, to Erin or Ireland, and argues that the word was invented in the primeval home of the Aryans, to indicate their partiality to cultivation, as distinguished from the nomadic habits of the Turanians, whose name is supposed to indicate their rapid journey or the fleetness of their horse. Certain it is that the word Arya is the one word in the Rig Veda which distinguishes the conquerors as a class, or even as a caste, from the aborigines of the country. And there are remarkable passages also which show that the new settlers, in calling themselves Arya, had not altogether forgotten the original signification of the word. One instance will suffice :—

“O ye two Asvins ! you have displayed your glory by teaching the *Arya* to cultivate with the plough and to sow corn, and by giving him rains for the production of his food, and by destroying the *Dasyu* by your thunderbolt” (I, 117, 21).

There are two other words in the Rig Veda which are synonymous, not with the Aryan tribe, but rather with man generally ; and both of them come from roots which indicate cultivation. The words are *Charshana* (1, 3, 7, &c.) and *Krishti* (1, 4, 6, &c.), and both these words come from modifications of the same root *Krish* or *Chrish* to cultivate.

Thus the very names which the Aryan conquerors of India gave themselves are names which are believed to indicate that useful occupation which distinguishes the civilised man from the barbarian, viz., cultivation of the soil.

There are numerous direct allusions in the Rig Veda to

agriculture, but the most remarkable among them is a hymn which is dedicated to a supposed god of agriculture, the Lord of the Field as he is called, and which we will translate in full :—

“ 1. We will win (cultivate) this field with the Lord of the Field ; may he nourish our cattle and our horses ; may he bless us thereby.

“ 2, O Lord of the Field ! bestow on us sweet and pure and butter-like and delicious and copious rain, even as cows give us milk. May the Lords of the water bless us.

“ 3. May the plants be sweet unto us ; may the skies and the rains and the firmament be full of sweetness ; may the Lord of the Field be gracious to us. We will follow him uninjured by enemies.

“ 4. Let the oxen work merrily ; let the men work merrily ; let the plough move on merrily. Fasten the traces merrily ; ply the goad merrily.

“ 5. O Suna and Sira ! accept this hymn. Moisten this earth with the rain you have created in the sky.

“ 6. O fortunate Furrow ! proceed onwards, we pray unto thee ; do thou bestow on us wealth and an abundant crop.

“ 7, May Indra accept this Furrow ; may Pushan lead her onwards. May she be filled with water, and yield us corn year after year.¹

“ 8. Let the ploughshares turn up the sod merrily ; let the men follow the oxen merrily ; may Parjanya moisten the earth with sweet rains. O Suna and Sira ! bestow on us happiness” (IV, 57).

We shall seek in vain in the entire range of later Sanscrit literature for a passage in which the humble hopes and wishes of simple agriculturists are so naturally described. This is the unique charm of the Rig Veda as a literary composition.

1 In these two remarkable verses, the furrow, Sita, is addressed as a female, and asked to yield copious harvests. In the Yajur Veda also, the furrow is similarly worshipped. And when the Aryans gradually conquered the whole of India, and primeval jungles and waste lands were marked with the furrow, the furrow of Sita assumed a more definite human character, and became the heroine of the Epic which describes the Aryan conquest of Southern India.

Whether it be an account of a battle with the aborigines, or a prayer to friendly Indra to come and have a cup of Soma, or a song of the simple cultivator,—the Rig Veda hymn always takes us nearer to the workings of a simple and manly heart than anything in the literature of later times.

We will translate a portion of another hymn, also relating to agriculture :—

“3. Fasten the ploughs, spread out the yokes, and sow the seed on this field which has been prepared. Let the corn grow with our hymns ; let the scythes fall on the neighbouring fields where the corn is ripe.

“4. The ploughs have been fastened ; the labourers have spread the yokes ; the wise men are uttering prayers to gods.

“5. Prepare troughs for the drinking of the animals. Fasten the leather-string and let us take out water from this deep and goodly well which never dries up.

“6. The troughs have been prepared for the animals ; the leather-string shines in the deep and goodly well which never dries up, and the water is easily got. Take out water from the well.

“7. Refresh the horses ; take up the corn stacked in the field ; and make a cart which will convey it easily. This well full of water for the drinking of animals, is one *drona* in extent, and there is a stone wheel to it. And the reservoir for the drinking of men is one *skanda*. Fill it with water” (X, 101).

Irrigation and cultivation in the Punjab are only possible by means of wells, and wells are reserved also for the drinking of men and of beasts ; and it is not surprising therefore that we should find references to wells in the Rig Veda. Another remarkable fact which appears from the passages translated above is, that horses were used for cultivation in those days, a custom still common in Europe, but not in India in modern times.

In X, 25, 4, and in many other places we have allusions to wells. In X, 93, 13, we are told how water was raised from wells for irrigation. The contrivance is the same as is still in vogue in Northern India ; a number of pots are tied to a string, and as the pots go up and down by the movement of a

wheel, they are filled in the well and pulled up and emptied and sent down again. The contrivance is called *ghatichakra* or, the circle of pots, and bears the same name to the present day.

In X, 99, 4, we have another allusion to irrigation of fields by means of canals which were replenished with water by means of a *drona*. And in X, 68, 1, we are told that cultivators who irrigated their fields kept away birds by uttering loud cries.

As stated above, the allusions to pasture are by no means so frequent as the allusions to agriculture. Pushan is the god of shepherds,—he is the sun as viewed by shepherds,—and is supposed to protect them and travellers generally in their wanderings over the country. And here and there in a hymn to Pushan, we find that the Aryans of India had brought with them recollections and songs about those migrations which they occasionally undertook in their primitive home, if not after their settlement in India. We translate one such hymn below :—

“1. O Pushan ! help us to finish our journey, and remove all dangers. O Son of the Cloud, do thou march before us !

“2. O Pushan ! do thou remove from our path him who would lead us astray, who strikes and plunders and does wrong.

“3. Do thou drive away that wily robber who intercepts journeys.

“4. Do thou trample under thy foot the vile carcass of him who plunders us in both ways (by stealth and by force) and who commits outrages.

“5. O wise Pushan, destroyer of enemies ! we implore of thee the protection with which thou didst shield and encourage our forefathers.

“6. O Pushan, possessed of all wealth, possessed of golden weapons, and chief among beings ! bestow on us thy riches.

“7. Lead us so that enemies who intercept may not harm us ; lead us by an easy and pleasant path. O Pushan ! devise means (for our safety) on this journey.

“8. Lead us to pleasant tracts covered with green grass ;

let there be no extreme heat by the way. O Pushan ! devise means (for our safety) on this journey.

"9 Be powrcfull in thy protection ; fill us with riches ; bestow on us wealth ; make us strong and give us food ! O Pushan ! devise means (for our safety) on this journey,

"10 We do not blame Pushan ; but we extol him in our hymns. We solicit wealth from the handsome Pushan" (1. 42).

There is also another interesting hymn on the practice of taking out cattle to pasture fields, and bringing them back. A few verses are worth translating :—

"4. We call the cowherd, let him take out these cows ; let him pasture them in the fields ; let him know and pick out the animals ; let him bring them back to the house ; let him pasture them on all sides.

"5. The cowherd seeks for the cows and brings them back to the house ; he pastures them on all sides. May he come home safe.

"8. O cowherd ! pasture the cows in all directions, and bring them back. Pasture them in various parts of the earth, and then bring them back" (X, 19).

There are allusions in the preceding passages to robbers who infested outlying tracts of the country, probably to the cattle-lifters and thieves among the aboriginal races, who hung around the Aryan villages and clearances, and lived by intercepting peaceful industry. We shall speak of them further on.

Allusions to trade and commerce must be necessarily rare in a collection of hymns to gods ; but, nevertheless, we are here and there surprised by passages which throw a curious light on the manners of the times. Loans and usury were well understood in those days, and Rishis (who, we should always remember, were worldly men in those days, and not hermits or anchorites), occasionally lament their state of indebtedness with the simplicity of primitive times. In one remarkable verse again, we are reminded of the finality of a sale-transaction, when once the sale is completed :—

"One sells a large quantity for a small price, and then goes to the purchaser and denies the sale, and asks for a higher price. But he cannot exceed the price once fixed on the plea that he has given a large quantity. Whether the price was

adequate or inadequate, the price fixed at the time of sale must hold good" (IV, 24, 9).

A passage like the above would indicate the existence of current money for the purposes of buying and selling. We have instances of Rishis acknowledging the gift of a hundred pieces of gold (V, 27, 2, &c.) and there can be no doubt, pieces of gold of a certain fixed value were used as money as indicated in these passages. At the same time it must be admitted that there is no distinct allusion to *coined* money in the Rig Veda. The word *Nishka* (I, 126, 2, &c.) is often used in the Rig Veda in a dubious sense. In some passages it means money, in others it means a golden ornament for the neck. The two interpretations are not necessarily contradictory, for in India pieces of gold used as money have habitually been used as ornaments for the neck since times immemorial.

On the other hand, there are distinct references to voyages by sea, though of course the words used may mean rivers only, and not the sea. The shipwreck of Bhujyu, and his deliverance by the gods Asvins, is constantly alluded to (I, 116, 3, &c.), and in I, 25, 7, the god Varuna is said to know the paths of the birds through the sky, and the paths of the ships over the sea. In IV, 55, 6, the poet refers to the "people who desiring to acquire wealth pray to the sea before undertaking a voyage": while in VII, 88, 3, Vasishtha says ;—

"When Varuna and I went on a boat and took her out to sea, I lived in the boat floating on the water and was happy in it rocking gracefully (on the waves)."

While there are these and other distinct allusions to voyage, there is absolutely no prohibition against it in the Rig Veda.



CHAPTER III

FOOD, CLOTHING, AND THE ARTS OF PEACE

Barley and wheat seem to have been the principal produce of the field, and the principal articles of food. The names of grain found in the Rig Veda are somewhat misleading, as they have come to bear a different signification in modern days from what they had in the ancient times. Thus the word *Yava*, which in modern Sanscrit implies barley only, was used in the Veda to imply food-grains generally, including wheat and barley. And the word *Dhana*, which, in Bengal at least, means paddy or rice, implies in the Rig Veda fried barley, which was used as food and offered to the gods. There is no allusion to *vrihi* (rice) in the Rig Veda.

We also find mention of various kinds of cakes prepared from these grains and used as food and offered to the gods. *Pakti* (from *pach*, to cook, or to prepare) means prepared cakes, and various other terms like *Purodasa* and *Apupa* and *Karambha*, are also used (III, 52, 1 and 2 ; IV, 24, 7, &c.)

It may be easily imagined that animal food was largely used by the early Hindus of the Punjab. We have frequent allusions to the sacrifice and to the cooking of cows, buffaloes, and bulls (I, 61, 12 ; II, 7, 5 ; V, 29, 7 and 8 ; VI, 17, 11 ; VI, 16, 47 ; VI, 28, 4 ; X, 27, 2 ; X, 28, 3, &c.).

In X, 89, 14, there is mention of a slaughter-house where cows were killed, and in X, 91, 14, there is an allusion to the sacrifice of horses, bulls, and rams. The allusions to the sacrifice of the horse are extremely rare, showing that, although the custom was introduced into India by the early Aryans from their primitive home, the flesh of horse as an article of food soon fell into disuse. In later times the sacrifice of the horse or the *Asvamedha* was performed on rare occasions with great pomp and circumstance by powerful kings, after they had subdued their neighbours and assumed a title answering to the Imperial title in Europe. There can be no doubt this great imperial rite rose out of the simple sacrifice of the horse practised in primitive times when the horse was still an article of

food. The pomp and ceremony, as well as certain revolting rites connected with the horse-sacrifice of later days, were unknown in Vedic times.

A fairly complete account of the sacrifice of the horse, such as it prevailed in the Vedic times, is to be found in hymn 152 of the first Mandala of the Rig Veda. The body of the horse was marked with a cane and was then dissected along the lines marked, and the ribs and the different limbs were separated. The meat was roasted and boiled, while the soul of the horse was supposed to go to the gods.

Who could have believed that this simple horse-sacrifice of the Rig Veda, the carving and the roasting and the boiling of the horse for worship and for the purposes of food, would have developed into the imperial ceremony of *Asvamedha* in later times? But many a practice which we see in its simple and natural aspect in the Veda has developed into pompous ceremonials in later days; and many a simple Vedic allegory relating to the striking phenomena of Nature has also developed into elaborate Puranic legends. Herein constitutes the true value of the Veda; we trace in it Hindu rites and ceremonials and the Hindu religion itself to their simple natural beginnings.

The fermented juice of the plant called *Soma* appears to have been the only intoxicating drink used in the Vedic times. So much were the ancient Aryans addicted to this drink that *Soma* was soon worshipped as a deity both in India and in Iran (under the name *Haoma* in the latter country), and we find one entire Mandala or Book of the Rig Veda dedicated to this deity. The Indo-Aryans appear to have been more addicted to fermented and intoxicating *Soma* than their peaceful brethren of Iran; and many are the allusions in the *Zenda-vesta* to the hated customs of their Indian brethren. Some antiquarians think that this was one great reason of those dissensions which broke out among the southern Aryans, and which led to the final separation of the Iranians from the Hindus.

The process by which the *Soma*-juice was prepared has been fully described in IX, 66, and in other hymns. We will translate a few verses from this hymn:—

"7. O Soma ! you have been crushed ; you flow as stream to Indra, scattering joy on all sides ; you bestow immortal food.

"8. Seven women stir thee with their fingers, blending their voices in a song to thee ; you remind the sacrificer of his duties at the sacrifice.

"9. You mix with water with a pleasing sound ; and the fingers stir you over a woollen strainer, and filter you. Your particles are thrown up then, and a sound arises from the woollen strainer.

"11. The woollen strainer is placed on a vessel, and the fingers repeatedly stir the Soma, which sends down a sweet stream into the vessel.

"13. O Soma ! you are then mixed with milk. Water runs towards thee with a pleasing sound."

From this description it would appear that the juice of Soma used to be taken—much as *Siddhi* is taken in our times—mixed with milk. The poets of the *Rig Veda* go into ecstasy over the virtues and the exhilarating powers of the Soma ; and some of their descriptions have developed into strange Puranic legends in subsequent times. One or two verses will illustrate this :—

"O Soma ! there is nothing so bright as thou. When poured out, thou welcomest all the gods to bestow on them immortality" (IX, 108, 3).

"The praiseworthy Soma has from ancient times been the drink of the gods ; he was milked from the hidden recesses of the sky ; he was created for Indra and was extolled" (IX, 110, 8).

"In that realm where there is perennial light, and where the Heaven is placed, O Soma, lead me to that deathless and immortal realm ! Flow thou for Indra" (IX, 113, 7.)

Such passages as these are to be found throughout the ninth book of the *Rig Veda*. Who could have guessed that the strange Puranic legends of the churning of the ocean and the discovery of the *Amrita* or immortal drink would have arisen from these simple Vedic descriptions of Soma ! The sky in the Veda is considered watery, and is often confused with the sea, and the milking of Soma from the sky is tran-

slated in the Puranas into the churning of the ocean for the *Amrita* !

It would appear from many passages in the Rig Veda that many arts were carried to a high state of excellence. Weaving was well known of course, and deft female fingers wove the warp and the woof in ancient times as in modern days (II, 3, 6 ; II, 38, 4, &c.). In one curious passage (VI, 9, 2), the Rishi laments his ignorance of the mysteries of religious rites by saying ; "I know not the warp and I know not the woof" of religious rites ; and in another place (X, 26, 6), the weaving and bleaching of sheep's wool are attributed to the god Pushan, who, as we have already seen, is the god of shepherds.

Every Aryan village had probably its barber then as new ! and the clearances of forests by fire are in one passage somewhat mysteriously described as the *shaving* of the earth (I. 164, 44). Carpentry was also well known, and we have frequent allusions to the construction of carts and chariots (III, 53. 19 ; IV, 9, 14 ; IV, 16, 20, &c.) The use of iron, of gold, and of other metals was well known ; in V. 9, 5, we have a reference to the work of an ironsmith, and in VI, 3, 4, we are told of goldsmiths melting gold.

But we get a better idea of working in metals in the Vedic times from the description of various gold ornaments and iron utensils and implements of war which is to be found throughout the Rig Veda. The allusions are numerous, and we can therefore only make a selection here which will convey a fair idea of the manufactures of those days. We are told of armours used in war in I, 140, 10 ; in II, 39, 4 ; in IV, 53, 2 ; and in various other places. In II. 34, 3, we have reference to golden helmets, and in IV, 34, 9, there is mention of armour for the shoulders or arms, probably a shield. The lightning has been compared to a javelin (*rishti*) in V. 52, 6, and in V, 54, 11 ; and also to a sword or battle-axe (*bashi*), and to bows and arrows and quivers in V, 57, 2. Three thousand mailed warriors are spoken of in VI, 27, 6 ; feathered, sharp-pointed shining shafts are described in VI, 46. 11 ; and sharp-edged swords are spoken of in VI, 47. 10. And in verses 26 and 29 of the same hymn we are told of war-chariots and kettle-drums. And lastly, in the 75th hymn of the sixth Mandala, we have a spirited account

of the arms and accoutrements of war which we will translate for our readers further on.

In IV, 2, 8, we have a reference to horses with golden caparisons, and in IV, 37, 4, V, 19, 3 and many other places we have allusions to the *Nishka*, a golden ornament worn in the neck. In V, 53, 4, the lighting ornaments of the Maruts are compared with jewelry (*Anji*), with necklaces (*Srak*), with golden breastplates (*Rukma*), and with bracelets and anklets (*Khadi*). In V, 54, 11, we are again told of anklets for the feet, and golden breast-plates for the breast, and of golden crowns (*Siprahhiranmayih*) for the head.

Thus it will be seen that a very considerable advance was made in the manufacture of arms, weapons, and various kinds of ornaments. We have references also to skin vessels (VI, 48, 18) and iron vessels (V, 30, 15), and several places to iron towns, which must be taken in figurative sense as signifying strong forts (VII, 3, 7; VII, 15, 14; VII, 95, I, &c.). We have also references to a hundred stone-built towns in IV, 30, 20, and other places.

There can be no doubt that in the various rocky and mountainous tracts where the early Hindus established their colonies, they soon learnt to utilise stone as a durable and cheap material of architecture; and there can be no difficulty in believing that in numerous Hindu towns many structures and surrounding walls were of stone. That the art of building was carried to some degree of excellence appears from many allusions to mansions with thousand pillars (II, 41, 5; V, 62, 6, &c.); but at the same time it must be admitted that there is no distinct allusion in the Rig Veda to the art of sculpture properly so-called. The researches of antiquarians have failed to discover in any part of India traces of sculptured stone of a time long previous to the Buddhist era; and in the numerous great museums of Europe, which are filled with the ancient stone monuments of Egypt and Babylon, India is not represented by any such monuments dating much before the Buddhist Period.

Most of the animals domesticated at the present day were domesticated in India in the remote period of the Rig Veda.

We have spirited accounts of the war horse in several places (VI, 46, 13 and 14, &c.)

Indeed, these war horses were so highly prized by the early Aryans in their battles against the aborigines, that the horse, under the name of *Dadhikra*, soon became an object of worship; and in IV, 38, we have a spirited account of the respect paid to this god-like being.

In IV, 4, 1, we have reference to a king riding with his ministers on an elephant. Among other domesticated animals, we have frequent mention of cows, goats, sheep, buffaloes, and dogs, which last were used in carrying burdens.

CHAPTER IV

WARS AND DISSENSIONS

As has been stated before, the early Hindus wrested the fertile tracts on the banks of the Indus and its tributaries from the primitive races of the Punjab ; but the aborigines did not give up their birthright without a struggle. Retreating before the more civilised organisation and valour of the Hindus in the open field, they still hung round in fastnesses and forests near every Hindu settlement and village, harassed them in their communication, waylaid and robbed them at every opportunity, stole their cattle, and often attacked them in considerable force. Well might they exclaim with the Gaels of Scotland, who had been similarly dispossessed of their fertile soil by the conquering Saxons, and had similarly retreated to barren fastnesses :—

“These fertile plains; that softened vale,
Were once the birthright of the Gael ;
The stranger came with iron hand,
And from our fathers reft the land
Where dwell we now ? See rudely swell
Crag over crag, and fell o’er fell.

Pent in this fortress of the North,
Think’st thou we will not sally forth.
To spoil the spoiler as we may,
And from the robber rend the prey ?
Ay, by my soul ! While on yon plain
The Saxon rears one shock of grain,
While, of ten thousand herds, there strays
But one along you river’s maze,—
The Gael, of plain and river heir ;
Shall, with strong hand, redeem his share !”

Unfortunately, however, they had no poet to hand down to us their view of the case, and the only account we have of this long war of centuries is from the conquering Hindus. It is needless to say that the conquerors viewed the aborigines with the contempt and hatred which have marked the conduct of all conquering nations, whether on the banks of the Indus

seventeen hundred years before Christ, or on the banks of the Mississippi seventeen hundred years after Christ ! History repeats itself ; and the Punjab was cleared of its non-Aryan aborigines just as the United States of America have, in modern times, been cleared of the many powerful and brave Indian races who lived and hunted and ruled within its primeval forests.

Of these wars with the aborigines we have frequent allusions in the Rig Veda ; and a translation of some of these passages will give a better idea of these interminable hostilities than any account that we can give of them. The allusions are so numerous that our only difficulty is in making a selection.

"Indra, who is invoked by many, and is accompanied by his fleet companions, has destroyed by his thunderbolt the *Dasyus* and *Simyus* who dwelt on earth, and then he distributed the fields to his white-complexioned friends (Aryans). The thunderer makes the sun shine and the rain to fall" (I, 100, 18). "Indra with his weapon, the thunderbolt, and in his vigour, destroyed the towns of the *Dasyus*, and wandered at his will. O holder of the thunderbolt ! be thou cognisant of our hymns, and cast thy weapon against the *Dasyu*, and increase the vigour and the fame of the *Arya*" (I, 103, 3).

In the very next hymn, we come across a curious allusion to aboriginal robbers who dwelt on the banks of four small streams called the Sifa, the Anjasi, the Kulisi, and the Virapatni, whose courses cannot now be determined. These robbers issued from their fastnesses and harassed the civilised Aryan villages, much in the same way as a true descendant of those aborigines, the Bhil Tantia in our own times, harassed the peaceful villages of Central India ! We translate the two verses below :—

"Kuyava gets scent of the wealth of others and appropriates it. He lives in the water and pollutes it. His two wives bathe in the stream ; may they be drowned in the depths of the Sifa river !

"Ayu lives in water in a secret fastness. He flourishes amidst the rise of waters. The rivers Anjasi, Kulisi, and Virapatni protect him with their waters" (I, 104, 3 and 4).

We proceed with some more extracts :—

"Indra protects his Arya worshipper in wars. He who protects him on countless occasions, protects him in all wars. He subdues the people who do not perform sacrifices for the benefit of men (Aryans)). He flays the enemy of his black skin and kills him and reduces him to ashes. He burns down all who do injury, and all who are cruel" (I, 130, 8).

"O destroyer of foes ! collect together the heads of these marauding troops, and crush them with thy wide foot ! Thy foot is wide !

"O Indra ! destroy the power of these marauding troops ! Throw them into the vile pit—the vast and vile pit !

"O Indra ! thou hast destroyed three times fifty such troops ! People extol this thy deed ; but it is nothing compared to thy prowess !

"O Indra ! destroy the Pishachis, who are reddish in appearance and utter fearful yells. Destroy all these Rakshasas"¹ (I, 133, 2-5).

"O Indra ! the poet prays to thee for pleasant food. Thou hast made the earth the bed (burial-ground) of the Dasas. Indra has beautified the three regions with his gifts ; he has slayed *Kuyavacha* for King *Varyani*.

"O Indra ! Rishis still extol that ancient deed of prowess ! Thou hast destroyed many marauders to put an end to war ; thou hast stormed the towns of enemies who worship no gods ; and thou hast bent the weapons of foes who worship no gods" (I, 174, 7 and 8).

"O Asvins ! destroy those who are yelling hideously like days, and are coming to destroy us ! Slay those who wish to fight with us ! You know the way to destroy them. Let each word of those who extol you bring wealth in return. O you truthful ones ! accept our prayers." (I, 182, 4).

"The far-famed and graceful Indra is gracious to men (Aryans) ! The destroying and powerful Indra has cast down the head of the malignant *Dasa* !

Indra, who slayed Vritra and stormed towns, has destroyed the troops of the black *Dasas*, and has made the earth and the

¹ Pishachis and Rakshasas may mean imaginary demons. We would rather think, however, that they here refer to the aborigines.

water for Manu.² May he fulfil the wishes of the sacrificer" (II, 20, 6 and 7).

We know how the Spaniards, the conquerors of America, owed their successes to a very great extent to their horses, animals previously unknown to the American aborigines, and and therefore regarded with a strange terror. It would seem that the war-horses of the early Indo-Aryans inspired the aborigines of India with a similar fear. The following passages, translated from a hymn to *Dadhikra*, or the deified war-horse, will therefore be regarded with interest:—

"As people shout and raise a cry after a thief who has purloined a garment, even so the enemies yell and shout at the sight of *Dadhikra*! As birds make a noise at the sight of the hungry hawk on its descent, even so the enemies yell and shout at sight of *Dadhikra* careering in quest of plunder of food and cattle!

"Enemies fear *Dadhikra*, who is radiant and destroying as a thunderbolt. When he beats back a thousand men around him, he becomes excited and uncontrollable in his strength" (IV, 38, 5 and 8).

It would seem from numerous passages in the Rig Veda that *Kutsa* was a powerful warrior and a mighty destroyer of the black aborigines. We are told in hymn 16 of the fourth *Māṇḍala*, that *Indra* slew the "*Dasyu*, who is wily and impious," to bestow wealth on *Kutsa* (verse 9); that he helped *Kutsa* and came to his house with the common object of slaying the *Dasyu* (verse 10); and that he slew fifty thousand "black-complexioned enemies" in battle (verse 13). In IV, 28, 4, we are told that *Indra* has made the *Dasyus* devoid of all virtues, and the object of hatred of all men; and in IV, 30, 15, we learn that *Indra* destroyed five hundred and a thousand *Dasas*.

We have similar allusions to the subjugation and destruction of *Dasyus* or *Dasas* in V, 70, 3; VI, 18, 3; and VI, 25, 2; while there is a curious reference to an unknown region

¹ Here, as elsewhere, *Manu* is spoken of as the ancestor of the Aryan man. In many places he is spoken of as the originator of cultivation and of the worship of fire which distinguished the Aryans.

inhabited by the *Dasyus* in VI, 47, 20, which deserves translation :—

“O ye gods ! We have travelled and lost our way, and came to a region where cattle do not pasture. The extensive region gives shelter to *Dasyus* only. O Brihaspati ! lead us in our search for cattle. O Indra ! show the way to your worshippers who have lost their way.”

It will be seen that the Aryan poets are sufficiently uncomplimentary in speaking of the shouts and yells of the aboriginal barbarians. The civilised conquerors could scarcely imagine that these yells could form a language, and have therefore in some places described the barbarians as without a language (V, 29, 10, &c.)

We have spoken before of Kuyava and Ayu, two aboriginal robbers who dwelt in fastnesses surrounded by rivers, and harassed the Aryan villages. We have frequent allusions to another powerful aboriginal leader who is called Krishna, probably because of black complexion. One of the passages relating to him deserves translation:—

“The fleet Krishna lived on the banks of the Ansumati river with ten thousand troops. Indra of his own wisdom became cognisant of this loudyelling sheaf. He destroyed the marauding host for the benefit of men (Aryans).

“Indra said : ‘I have seen the fleet Krishna. He is lurking in the hidden region near the Ansumati, like the sun in a cloud. O Maruts ! I desire you to engage in fight, and to destroy him.’

“The fleet Krishna then appeared shining on the banks of the Ausumati. Indra took Brihaspati as his ally, and destroyed the fleet and godless army” (VIII, 96, 13—15).

Not only have the aborigines been described as fond of yelling and devoid of a language, but they are in other places considered as scarcely human. We are told in one place :—

“We are surrounded on all sides by *Dasyu* tribes. They do not perform sacrifices ; they do not believe in anything ; their rites are different ; they are not men ! O destroyer of foes ! kill them. Destroy the *Dasa* race !” (X, 22, 8).

In X, 49, Indra proclaims that he has deprived the *Dasyu* race of the name of *Arya* (verse 3) ; that he has destroyed

Navavastva and Brihadratha of the *Dasa* race (verse 6) ; that he cuts the *Dasas* in twain,—“it is for this fate that they have been born !” (verse 7).

Such were the aborigines with whom the early Hindus carried on an interminable war, and such was the fate to which they consigned their less civilised neighbours, the primeval owners of the Indian soil ! It is abundantly evident that no love was lost between the conquerors and the conquered. It was by ceaseless fighting that the conquerors protected themselves in their newly-conquered country, gradually extended the limits of cultivation, built new villages, threw out new colonies in primeval jungles, and spread the light of civilisation and the fame of their prowess around. They hated the despised barbarians with a genuine hatred, killed numbers of them when they could, thinned their ranks with their horses, called them yelling hounds and men without a tongue and brutes below the ranks of men, and almost believed they were born to be slain,—“it is for this fate that they have been born !” On the other hand, the stubborn barbarians had their revenge too. Retreating before the more civilised valour of the Hindus, they hung about in every fastness and every bend of a river, they waylaid and robbed travellers, harassed villages, killed or stole cattle, and sometimes fell on the Hindus in great numbers. With that dogged tenacity which is peculiar to barbarians they disputed every inch of ground as they retreated, they interrupted the religious rites of the conquerors, despised their gods, and plundered their wealth. But in spite of every resistance the colonies of the more civilised races extended in every direction, the area of civilisation widened, jungles and wastes were brought under cultivation and dotted with villages and royal towns, and the kingdom of the early Hindus extended over the whole of the Punjab. The barbarians were either exterminated, or retreated before the ever-advancing line of Aryan civilisation into those hills and fastnesses which their children still inhabit.

It may be imagined, however that some among the weaker barbarians preferred abject subjection to extermination or exile. We find traces accordingly in the Rig

Veda of *Dasyus* who at last owned the domination of the more powerful race, and who adopted their civilisation and their language. These, then, were the first *Hinduised aborigines* of India.

Our extracts on the subject of the Aryans with the aborigines have been numerous. We will now quote one or two passages to show that the Aryan conquerors were not always at peace among themselves! Sudas was an Aryan king and conqueror, and we are frequently told that various Aryan tribes and kings combined against him, and he was victorious over them all. The allusions to these internecine wars among Aryan races, and to the particular tribes who fought against Sudas, are historically among the most important passages in the Rig Veda.

"8. The wily foes planned destruction, and broke down the embankment of the Adina (to cause an inundation). But Sudas filled the earth with his prowess, and Kavi, the son of Chayamana, fell like a victim.

"9. For the waters of the river flowed through their old channel and did not take a new course; and Sudas' horse marched over the country. Indra placed the hostile and talkative men and their children under Sudas.

"11. Sudas earned glory by killing twenty-one men of both regions. As the young priest cuts the kusa grass in the house of sacrifice, even so Sudas cut his enemies. The hero Indra sent the Maruts for his succour.

"14. The sixty-six thousand six-hundred and sixty-six warriors of Anu and Druhya, who had desired for cattle, and were hostile to Sudas, were laid low. These deeds proclaim the glory of Indra!

"17. It was Indra who enabled the poor Sudas to achieve these deeds. Indra enabled the goat to kill the strong lion. Indra felled the sacrificial post with a needle. He bestowed all the wealth on Sudas." (VII, 18).

The poet Tritsu or Vasishtha, who sang those deeds of Sudas' glory, was not unrewarded for his immortal verse. For in verses 22 and 23, he acknowledges with gratitude that the valiant Sudas rewarded him with two hundred cows and two chariots and four horses with gold

trappings ! We quote below another hymn relating to Sudas.

"1. O Indra and Varuna ! Your worshippers, relying on your help and seeking to win cattle, have marched eastwards with their weapons. Crush, Indra and Varuna, your enemies, whether *Dasas* or *Arfas*, and defend Sudas with your protection.

"2. Where men raise their banners and meet in battle, where nothing seems to favour us, where the men look to the sky and tremble, then, O Indra and Varuna ! help us and speak to us words of comfort.

"3. O Indra and Varuna ! the ends of the earth seem to be lost and the noise ascends to the skies ! The troops of the enemy are approaching. O Indra and Varuna ! who ever listen to prayers, come near us with your protection,

"4. O Indra and Varuna ! you pierced the yet unassailed Bheda, and saved Sudas. You listened to the prayers of the Tritsus. Their priestly vocation bore fruit in the hour of battle.

"5. O Indra and Varuna ! the weapons of the enemy assail me in all directions, the foes assail me among marauding men. You are the owners of both kinds of wealth ! Save us in the day of battle.

"6. Both parties invoked Indra and Varuna for wealth at the time of war. But in this battle you protected Sudas with the Tritsus who were attacked by ten kings.

"7. O Indra and Varuna ! the ten kings who did not perform sacrifices were unable, though combined, to beat Sudas."

"8. You bestowed vigour, Indra and Varuna, to Sudas, when surrounded by ten chiefs ; when the white-robed Tritsus, wearing braided hair, worshipped you with oblations and hymns" (VII, 83).

Another remarkable hymn gives an account of the weapons used in war in those days. We make some extracts :—

"1. When the battle is nigh, and the warrior marches in his armour, he appears like the cloud ! Warrior, let not thy person be pierced ; be victorious ; let thy armour protect you !

"2. We will win cattle with the bow, we will win with

the bow ; we will conquer the fierce and proud enemy with the bow ! May the bow foil the desires of the enemy ! We will spread our conquests on all sides with the bow !

"3. The string of the bow when pulled approaches the ear of the archer, making way in battle. It whispers words of consolation to him, and with sound it clasps the arrow, even as a loving wife clasps her husband,

"5. The quiver is like the parent of many arrows ; the many arrows are like its children. It makes a sound, and hangs on the back of the warrior, and furnishes arrows in battle, and conquers the enemy.

"6. The expert charioteer stands on his chariot and drives his horses wheresoever he will. The reins restrain the horses from behind. Sing of their glory !

"7. The horses raise the dust with their hoofs, and career over the field with the chariots, with loud neighing. They do not retreat, but trample the marauding enemies under their feet.

"11. The arrow is feathered ; the deer (horn) is its teeth. Well pulled and sent by the cow-leather-string, it falls on the enemy. Wherever men stand together or are separate, there the shafts reap advantage,

"14. The leather guard protects the arm from the abrasion of the bow-string, and coils round the arm like a snake in its convolutions. It knows its work, and is efficient, and protects the warrior in every way.

"15. We extol the arrow which is poisoned, whose face is of iron ;¹ whose stem is of Parjanya" (VI, 75).

Before concluding our extracts, we will make one more from a hymn about the coronation of victorious kings,

"1. O king ! I Place you in the stations of a king. Be the lord of this country ! Be immovable and fixed ! Let all the subjects cherish thee ! Let not your kingdom be destroyed !

1 This passage shows that the arrow heads were of iron. Parjanya in the god of rains. Stems of Parjanya probably mean stems of reed growing in the rains. Verse 11 shows that arrow-heads were sometimes of deer-horn.

"2. Remain here fixed as the mountain ; do not be dethroned ! Remain fixed like Indra, and support the kingdom !

"3. Indra has received the sacrificial offerings, and supports the newly-coronated king ! Soma blesses him.

"4. The sky is fixed, the earth is fixed, the mountains are fixed, this universe is fixed. He also is fixed as king among his subjects !

"5. May king Varuna make you immovable ! May the good Brihaspati make you immovable ; may Indra and Agni support you and make you immovable.

"6. See, I mix these immortal offerings with the immortal Soma-juice. Indra has brought your subjects under your rule, and made them willing to pay you revenue !" (X. 173).

These extracts are enough. We have elsewhere shown that the warriors used not only armour and helmets, but also protecting armour for the shoulder, probably shields. They used javelins and battle-axes, and sharp-edged swords, beside bows and arrows. All the weapons of war known elsewhere in ancient times were known in India four thousand years ago. Drums assembled men in battle, banners led them on in compact masses, and the use of war-horses and chariots was well known. Tame elephants were in use too, and we have allusions to kings riding on richly-caparisoned elephants with their ministers (IV, 4, 1). But it does not appear that elephants were regularly used in war in the Vedic Period, as they were in the third and fourth centuries before Christ when the Greeks came to India.

For the rest, it was a turbulent time when the Vedic warriors lived and fought. They had not only to wage an interminable war against the aborigines, but the Hindu States were divided among themselves, and a powerful leader was often bent on annexing his neighbour's state. Rishis engaged in sacrifices asked for prowess to conquer the foes, or prayed to the gods for sons who would win victory in battles. Every able-bodied man was a warrior, and was ever prepared to defend his home and his fields and his cattle with his strong right arm. Every Hindu colony or tribe, while attentive to the worship of the

gods and to the cultivation of the various arts of peace, was at the same time alive to the fact that its national existence depended on a constant preparedness for war. And the great conglomeration of Hindu tribes, which spread from the banks of the Indus to the banks of the Sarasvati, consisted of hardy, brave, and warlike people, who maintained their footing in the land, and their independence and national existence by constant struggles, and a determination to win or die.

It is sad to contemplate this state of things. But where is the country in which, in ancient times, tribes and nations had not to maintain a ceaseless war for their aggrandisement, or even for their very existence? And even in modern times, during the two thousand years which have elapsed since Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ preached their messages of peace, where shall we seek for the tribe or nation which could hope to reap the results of its peaceful industry without a constant struggle against its neighbours? With the exception of a few countries advantageously situated, all the nations of Europe are armed to the teeth; all the individuals, by millions, of great kingdoms and empires, are eternally prepared for war, ready on a week's notice to leave their homes and occupations and march to the frontier! Civilisation has done much for the cause of humanity; but civilisation has not converted the sword into the scythe, or enabled man to reap the results of his peaceful industry without a struggle to the death against his neighbour.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL LIFE

It was by such continuous wars against the aborigines of the soil that the Aryans at last conquered the whole of the Punjab from the Indus to the Sarasvati, and from the mountains probably to the sea.

As might be expected, we have frequent allusions to the Indus and its five tributaries. Hymn 75 of the tenth Mandala is a remarkable instance, and we will give our readers a translation of the entire hymn :—

“1. O ye streams ! The bard celebrates your excellent prowess in the house of the worshipper. They flow in three systems, seven streams in each system. The prowess of the Indus is superior to that of all others.

“2. O Indus ! when you ran towards lands rich in food, Varuna opened out the way for you. You flow over a spacious path on the land. You shine above all flowing rivers.

“3. The mighty sound of the Indus ascends above the earth to the sky ! She flows with mighty force and in radiant form. Her mighty sound is heard as if rains are descending from the clouds with great noise. The Indus comes roaring like a bull.

“4. As cows bring milk to their calves, even thus, O Indus, the other streams come sounding to you with their waters ! As a king marches with his forces to battle, even thus you march in front with two systems of rivers flowing by your side !¹

“5. O Ganga ! O Yamuna and Sarasvati and Sutudri (Sutlej) and Parushni (Ravi) ! share this my praise among you ! O river combined with Asikni (Chinab) ! O Vitasta (Jhilam) ! O Arjikiya (Beas), combined with Sushoma (Indus) ! hear my words.

¹ i.e., the tributaries coming from Cabul in the west, and the tributaries flowing through the Punjab in the east, as named in the two following verses.

"6. O Indus ! first thou flowest united with Trishtama, then with Susartu and Rasa and the Sveti. You unite Krumu (Kurum river) and Gomati (Gomal river) with Kubha (Cabul river) and Mehatnu. You proceed together with these rivers.

"7. The irresistible Indus proceeds straight, white and dazzling in splendour ! She is great, and her waters fill all sides with mighty force. Of all the flowing rivers, none is flowing like her ! She is wild like a mare, beautiful like a well-developed woman !

"8. The Indus is ever young and beautiful. She is rich in horses, in chariots, and in garments ; she is rich in gold and is beautifully clad ! She is rich in corn and in wool and in straw, and has covered herself with sweet flowers.

"9. The Indus has fastened horses to her easy chariot, and has brought food therein to us. The greatness of the chariot is extolled as mighty ; it is irresistible and great and rich in its fame !"

The hymn is remarkable for its power and its beauty, and remarkable also for the extensive vision of the poet who, as Max Muller says, takes in at one swoop three great river-systems, those flowing from the north-west into the Indus, those joining it from the north-east, and in the distance the Ganges and the Jumna with their tributaries. "It shows the widest geographical horizon of the Vedic poets, confined by the snowy mountains in the north, the Indus and the range of the Suleiman mountains in the west, the Indus or the sea in the south, and the valley of the Jumna and Ganges in the east. Beyond that the world, though open, was unknown to the Vedic poets."

The rivers of the Punjab are sometimes spoken of together as the "seven rivers," and it is explained in one place (VII, 36, 6), that the seven rivers have the Indus for their mother and the Sarasvati as the seventh. The Indus and its five branches still water the primeval home of the early Hindus, but the Sarasvati, which was the most sacred of ancient rivers and was worshipped even in that remote time as a goddess, has since ceased to flow. Its bed is still visible near Kurukshetra and Thaneshvar, and these places are still considered sacred by the Hindus.

There is one somewhat curious passage in which the Rishi Visvamitra, encumbered with the chariots and horses and other rewards bestowed on him by King Sudas, finds a difficulty in crossing the confluence of the Beas and the Sutlej, and pours out an entire hymn (III, 33) to appease the anger of the roaring flood ! We have seen that this Sudas was a mighty conqueror and subjugated ten surrounding kings, and was the victor of great battles which form the theme of some spirited hymns. This mighty conqueror seems also to have been a patron of learning and religion, and liberally rewarded the sages of the houses of Visvamitra and Vasishtha alike. As a consequence, there was jealousy between these two priestly houses to which we will allude further on.

While references to the rivers of the Punjab are thus frequent, allusions to the Ganges and the Jumna are rare. We have already translated a hymn in which both those rivers are named.

They only other passage in the Rig Veda where the Ganges is alluded to, is VI, 45, 31, where the high banks of the Ganges are the subject of a simile. The famed cattle in the pasture-fields along the banks of the Jumna are alluded to in V, 52, 17.

Thus the land of the five rivers was the earliest home of the Aryan settlers in India ; and it would seem that the settlers along the five rivers gradually formed themselves into five tribes or nations. The "five lands" (*Pancha-Kshiti*) are alluded to in I, 7, 9 ; I, 176, 3 ; VI, 46, 7, and in other places. Similarly we read of the "five cultivating tribes" (*Pancha-Krishti*) in II, 2, 10 ; IV, 38, 10 ; and other places, and we read of "five peoples" (*Pancha-Jana*) in VI, 11, 4 ; VI, 51, 11 ; VIII, 32, 22 ; IX, 55, 23, and other places.

It was these "five tribes" of simple, bold, and enterprising Aryans, living by agriculture and by pasture on the fertile banks of the Indus and its tributaries, which have spread their civilisation from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.

We now turn to the interesting and pleasing subject of the social and domestic manners and the home-life of these five tribes of the Punjab. The first thing that strikes us here is the absence of those unhealthy rules and restrictions, those

marked distinctions between man and man and between class and class, which form the most unpleasant feature of later Hindu society. We have already seen that the sturdy Hindus of the Vedic times recognised no restrictions against the use of beef, and that they refer with pride to their merchants going to the sea. We have seen too, that the Rishis did not form a separate and exclusive class, and did not pass their lives away from the world in penance and contemplation. On the contrary, the Rishis were practical men of the world who owned large herds of cattle, cultivated fields, fought against the aboriginal enemies in times of war, and prayed to their gods for wealth and cattle, for victory in wars, and for blessings on their wives and children. Every father of a family was in fact a Rishi on a small scale, and worshipped his gods in his own house in his own humble fashion, and the women of the family joined in the worship, and helped in the performance of the ceremonies. Some among the community were of course prominent in the composition of hymns and the performance of great sacrifices; and kings and rich men sent for them on great occasions, and rewarded them handsomely. But even these great composers—these great Rishis of the Rig Veda—did not form an exclusive caste of their own. They were worldly men, mixed and married with the people, shared property with the people, fought the wars of the people, and were of the people.

One martial Rishi for instance (in V, 23, 2) prays for a son who will conquer enemies in war. Another (in VI, 20, 1) prays for wealth and corn-fields and a son who will destroy his foes. Another (in IX, 69, 8) prays for wealth and gold, for horses and cows, for profuse harvests, and excellent progeny. Another Rishi, with naive simplicity, says that his cattle are his wealth and his Indra! (VI, 28, 5.) Throughout the Rig Veda the Rishis are the people. There is not the shadow of any evidence that the Rishis or priests were a "caste" of their own, different from the fighters and cultivators.²

² The solitary mention of the four castes, in X, 90, 12, will not be considered an exception, or weaken our argument. The hymn itself was composed centuries after the time when the Rig Veda hymns were

This will be considered by impartial judges to be very good evidence that the caste-system did not exist. It proves a negative much more convincingly than many positive facts can be proved. In a vast collection of hymns, composed during six hundred years and more, and replete with references to the habits and manners and customs of the people,—replete with allusions to agriculture and pasture and manufacture, to wars against aborigines, to marriage and domestic rules, and the duties and position of women, to religious observances and to elementary astronomy as then known,—we have not one single passage to show that the community was cut up into hereditary "*Castes*." Is it possible to suppose that the wonderful system existed, and yet there is no allusion to that fundamental principle of society in the ten thousand verses of the Rig Veda? Is it possible to find a single religious work of later times, of one-tenth the dimensions of the Rig Veda, which is silent on that system?

So far, then, we have proved a negative in the only way in which a negative can be proved. But curiously enough there is positive proof, and various passages in the Rig Veda show, that the caste-system did not exist. The very word "*varna*," which in later Sanscrit indicates caste, is used in the Rig Veda to distinguish the Aryans and the non-Aryans, and nowhere indicates separate sections in the Aryan community (III, 34, 9, &c.). The very word *Kshatriya*, which in later Sanscrit means the military caste, is used in the Veda simply as an adjective which means strong, and is applied to gods (VII, 64, 2; VII, 89, 1, &c.). The very word *Vipra*, which in later Sanscrit means the priestly caste, is used in the Rig Veda merely as an adjective which means wise, and which is applied to gods (VII, 11, 6, &c.). And the very word *Brahmana*,

generally composed, as is proved by its language and its ideas. It was composed after the Rik, and the Saman and the Yajur Vedas had been separately classified (verse 9), and after the idea of the sacrifice the Supreme Being (unknown elsewhere in the Rig Veda) had found a place in the Hindu religion. It was composed, as Colebrooke states, after the rude versification of the Rig Veda had given place to the more sonorous metre of a later age. All scholars agree as to this hymn being comparatively modern.

which in later Sanscrit means also the priestly caste, is used in a hundred places in the Rig Veda to imply the composers of hymns, and nothing else (VII, 103, 8, &c.).

We would gladly multiply evidence, but our limits forbid. But we cannot help producing one piece of evidence. With that charming simplicity which is the characteristic beauty of the Rig Veda, one Rishi says pathetically of himself :—

“Behold, I am a composer of hymns, my father is a physician, my mother grinds corn on stone. We are all engaged in different occupations. As cows wander (in various directions) in the pasture-fields for food, so we (in various occupations) worship thee, O Soma ! for wealth. Flow thou for Indra !” (IX, 112, 3). Those who suppose that the hereditary caste-system existed in the Vedic times will find some difficulty in explaining passages like the above, where father, mother, and son are described as physician, corn-grinder, and composer of hymns !

Later asserters of the caste-system have sometimes tried to explain these passages, and with the most wonderful results ! Like most other Rishis of the Rig Veda (who, we have seen before, constantly prayed for warlike sons), Visvamitra was a warrior and a composer of hymns. Later Hindus were shocked at this, and invented a beautiful Puranic myth to explain how Visvamitra was first a Kshatriya and then became a Brahman. Needless endeavour, for Visvamitra was neither a Kshatriya nor a Brahman ! He was a Vedic Rishi, i. e., a warrior and priest, long before the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, as such, were known !³

3 It gives us much pleasure to be able to cite here the authority of three scholars who have devoted their lifetime to the study of the Veda, and who form the Triumvirate of Vedic scholarship in Europe :—

“If then, with all the documents before us, we ask the question, does caste, as we find it in Manu, and at the present day, form part of the most ancient religious teaching of the Vedas ? We can answer with a decided ‘No’ ”—Max Muller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. ii. (1867), p 307. .

“There are no castes as yet, the people are still one united whole, and bear but one name, that of *Visas*,”—Weber, *Indian Literature* (translation). p. 38.

And lastly, Roth shows how in the Vedic Age the domestic:

As we have seen, then, every father of a family was his own priest, and his home was his temple. There is no mention of idols in the Rig Veda, none of temples or places of worship where the people were to congregate. The sacred fire was lighted in the house of every house-holder, and he chanted the beautiful and simple hymns which we now find collected in the Rig Veda. We have a pleasing picture of women who assisted at these sacrifices, who ordered the necessary things, prepared them with pestle and mortar, extracted the Soma-juice, stirred it with their fingers, and strained it through a woollen strainer. In numerous places we find mention of wives joining their husbands, and performing the sacrifice together. They offer the oblations together, and hope thereby to go to heaven together (I, 131, 3 ; V, 43, 15, &c.). A few verses from a pious hymn on this subject will no doubt interest our readers.

"5. O ye gods ! The married couple who prepare oblations together, who purify the Soma-juice and mix it with milk.

"6. May they obtain food for their eating, and come united to the sacrifice. May they never have to go in quest of food.

"7. They do not make vain promises of offerings to the gods, nor withhold your praise. They worship you with the best offerings.

"8. Blest with youthful and adolescent offspring, they acquire gold, and they both attain to a mature age.

"9. The gods themselves covet the worship of such a couple who are fond of sacrifices, and offer grateful food to the gods. They embrace each other to continue their race, and they worship their gods !" (VIII, 31).

Still more grateful to us is the picture of cultured ladies who were themselves Rishis, and composed hymns and per-

priests of petty kings were called Brahmins, and had not yet formed into a caste. And the great scholar explains how in a later age,—that of the Mahabharata,—“powerful communities should arise among the domestic priests of petty kings, and their families should attain to the highest importance in every department of life, and should grow into a caste.”—Quoted in Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. i, (1872), p. 291.

formed sacrifices like men. For there were no unhealthy restrictions against women in those days, no attempt to keep them secluded or uneducated or debarred from their legitimate place in society. There is mention of veiled wives and brides, but no allusion to women being kept in seclusion. On the contrary, we meet them everywhere in their legitimate spheres of action, taking a share in sacrifices, and evercising their influence on society. We cherish the picture of the cultured lady Visvavara, which has been handed down to us through thousands of years,—a pious lady who composed hymns, performed sacrifices, and with true fervency invoked the god Agni to regulate and keep within virtuous bounds the mutual relations of married couples (V. 28, 3). We meet with the names of other ladies also who were Rishis of the Rig Veda,

In a society so simple as that of the Vedic times, the relations of life were determined by the needs and requirements of individuals rather than by cast-iron rules as in later days ; and there was no religious obligation, therefore, that every girl must be married. On the contrary, we find allusions to unmarried women who remained in the homes of their fathers, and naturally claimed and obtained a share of the paternal property (II, 17, 7). On the other hand, we have frequent references to careful and industrious wives who superintended the arrangements of the house, and like the dawn roused and sent every one in the house to his work in the morning (I, 124, 24), and who possessed those domestic virtues for which Hindu wives have always been noted from the earliest to the present times. Occasionally we have allusions to women who went astray (II, 29, 1) ; to maidens who had no brothers to watch over their morals ; and wives who were faithless to their husbands (IV, 5, 5 ; X, 34, 4). And we are told of the wife of a ruined gambler who becomes the object of other men's lust (X, 34, 4).

It would seem that girls had some voice in the selection of their husband. Their selection was not always happy, for "many a woman is attracted by the wealth of him who seeks her. But the woman who is of gentle nature and of graceful form selects, among many, her own loved

one as her husband" (X, 27, 12). We can almost imagine we see the *Svayamvara* of later times foreshadowed in the above verse. There can be no doubt, however, that fathers always exercised a wise control in the selection of husband for their daughters ; and as at the present day, fathers gave away their girls gracefully adorned and decked with golden ornaments (IX, 46, 2 ; X, 39, 14).

The ceremony of marriage was an appropriate one, and the promises which the bridegroom and bride made to each other were suitable to the occasion. We will translate some verses from a hymn in the later portion of the Rig Veda, in which we find a pleasing picture of the ceremony. The first two among the following verses will show that the unnatural custom of child-marriage was unknown, and that girls were married after they had attained their youth :—

"21. O Visvavasu ! (god of marriage), arise from this place, for the marriage of this girl is over. We extol Visvavasu with hymns and prostrations. Go to some other maiden who is still in her father's house and has attained the signs of the age of marriage. She will be your share, know of her.

"22. O Visvavasu ! arise from this place. We worship thee, bending in adoration. Go to an unmarried maiden whose person is well developed ; make her a wife and unite her to a husband.

"23. Let the paths by which our friends go in quest of a maiden for marriage be easy and of free thorns. May Aryaman and Bhaga lead us well. O gods ! may the husband and wife be well united.

"24. O maiden ! the graceful sun had fastened thee ties (of maidenhood), we release thee now of those ties. We place thee with thy husband in a place which is the home of truth and the abode of righteous actions.

"25. We release this maiden from this place (her father's house), but not from the other place (her husband's house). We unite her well with the other place. O Indra ! may she be fortunate and the mother of worthy sons.

"26. May Pushan lead thee by the hand from this place. May the two Asvins lead thee in a chariot. Go to thy (husband's) house and be the mistress of the house. Be

the mistress of all, and exercise thine authority over all in that house.

"27. Let children be born unto thee, and blessings attend thee here. Perform the duties of thy household with care. Unite thy person with the person of this thy husband ; exercise thy authority in this thy house until old age.

"40. First Soma accepts thee ; then Gandharva accepts thee ; Agni is thy third lord ; the son of man is the fourth to accept thee.⁴

"41. Soma bestowed this maiden to Gandharva, Gandharva gave her to Agni, Agni has given her to me with wealth and progeny.

"42. O bride and bride ! do ye remain here together ; do not be separated. Enjoy food of various kinds ; remain in your own home, and enjoy happiness in company of children and grandchildren.

"43. (The bride and bridegroom say), May Prajapati bestow on us children ; may Aryaman keep us united till old age. (Address to the bride), O bride ! Enter with auspicious signs the home of thy husband. Do good to our male servants and our female servants, and to our cattle.

"44. Be thine eyes free from anger ; minister to the happiness of thy husband ; do good to our cattle. May thy mind be cheerful ; and may thy beauty be bright. Be the mother of heroic sons, and be devoted to the gods. Do good to our male servants and our female servants, and to our cattle.

"45. O Indra ! make this woman fortunate and the mother of worthy sons. Let ten sons be born of her, so that there may be eleven men in the family with the husband.

"46. (Address to the bride), May thou have influence over thy father-in-law, and over thy mother-in-law, and be as a queen over thy sister-in-law and brother-in-law.

"47 (The bridegroom and bride say), May all the gods unite our hearts ; may Matarisvan and Dhatri and the goddess of speech unite us together" (X, 85).

4 This and the following verse would show that the bride was offered to the three gods before she was united to the bridegroom.

Our extract has been somewhat lengthy, but our readers will not regret it. The extract shows at once the appropriate nature of the ceremony that was performed, and the position which the young bride occupied in home and the affections of her lord.

Polygamy was allowed among kings and the rich people in Vedic times, as it was allowed in olden times in all countries and among all nations. Domestic dissensions were the natural result in such instances, and we have hymns in the latter part of the Rig Veda in which wives curse their fellow-wives (X, 145 ; X, 159). The evil seems, however, to have grown in the latter part of the Vedic Age, for there are scarcely any allusions to it in the earlier hymns.

There are two curious verses which seem to lay down the law of inheritance, and are therefore of peculiar interest. We gave a translation below :—

“1. The father who has no son honours his son-in law, capable of begetting sons, and goes (*i. e.*, leaves his property) to the son of his daughter. The sonless father trusts in his daughter’s offspring, and lives content.

“2. A son does not give any of his father’s property to a sister. He gives her away to be the wife of a husband. If a father and mother beget both son and daughter, then one (*i. e.*, son) engages himself in the acts and duties of his father, while the other (daughter) receives honour” (III, 31).

This is the first germ of the Hindu law of inheritance, which makes the son, and not the daughter, the inheritor of his father’s property and religious duties, and which allows the property to go to the daughter’s son only in the absence of male issue. We think we discover the first germs of the Hindu law of adoption too in such passages as the following :—

“As a man who is not indebted gets much wealth, so we too shall get the treasure that endures (*i. e.*, a son). O Agni ! let us not have son begotten of another. Do not follow the ways of the ignorant.

“A son begotten of another may yield us happiness, but can never be regarded or accepted as one’s own. And verily he ultimately goes back to his own place. Therefore, may a

son be newly born unto us who will bring us food and destroy our foes" (VII, 4, 7 and 8).

We have spoken in this chapter of marriage and Inheritance ; we will complete our account of domestic customs by making some extracts with regard to funeral rites. Yama in the Rig Veda is not the god of hell, but the god of the heaven of the righteous, the god who rewards the virtuous man after his death, in a happy land, His two dogs, however, are objects to be avoided or propitiated.

"O thou deceased ! proceed to the same place where our forefathers have gone, by the same path which they followed. The two kings, Yama and Varuna, are pleased with the offerings ; go and see them.

"8. Go to that happy heaven and mix with the early forefathers. Mix with Yama and with the fruits of thy virtuous deeds. Leave sin behind, enter thy home.

"9. O ye ghosts ! leave this place, go away. move away. For the forefathers have prepared a place for the deceased. That place is beautiful with day, with sparkling waters and with light ; Yama assigns this place to the dead.

"10. O thou deceased ! these tow dogs have four eyes and a strange colour. Go past them quickly. Then proceed by the beautiful path to those wise forefathers, who spend spend their time in joy and happines with Yama" (X, 14),

These verses give us some idea of the belief in future happiness as it prevailed among the Hindus of the Vedic Age. The rites of cremation and burial are alluded to in the following passages :—

"O fire ! do not reduce this deceased into ashes ; do not give him pain. Do not mangle his skin or his person. O fire ! send him to the home of our fathers as soon as his body is burnt in thy heat" (X. 16, 1).

"10. O thou deceased ! go to the extended earth who is a mother ; she is extensive and beautiful. May her touch be soft as that of wool or of a female. You have performed sacrifices, may she save thee from unrighteousness.

"11. O earth ! rise up above him, do not give him pain. Give him good things, give him consolation. As a mother

covers her child with the hem of her cloth, so cover the deceased.

"12. Let the earth, raised on him as a mound, lie light. Let a thousand particles of dust rest on him. Let them be to him as a house filled with butter, let them form a shelter to him" (X, 18).

It remains only to allude to one more remarkable verse of this hymn, which distinctly sanctions the marriage of widows :—

"Rise up, woman, thou art lying by one whose life is gone ; come to the world of the living, away from thy husband, and become the wife of him who holds thy hand, and is willing to marry thee" (X, 18, 8),

The translation is based on Sayana's rendering of the passage in the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, and there can be little doubt as to its correctness, because the word *Dldhishu* used in the passage has only one meaning in the Sanscrit language, viz., the second husband of a woman. We quote here with pleasure the following remarks with which Rajendra Lala Mitra winds up a paper on Funeral Ceremony in Ancient India :—"That the remarriage of widows in Vedic times was a national custom, can be established by a variety of proofs and arguments ; the very fact of the Sanscrit language having, from ancient times, such words as *Didhishu*, 'a man that has married a widow,' *Parapurva*, 'a woman that has taken a second husband,' *Paunarbhava*, 'a son of a woman by her second husband,' are enough to establish it."

It is with pain and regret that we refer to another passage, also belonging to this remarkable hymn, which is perfectly harmless in the *Rig Veda* itself, but which was altered and mistranslated in later times to sanction the barbarous custom of *Sati*, or the burning of the widow on the pyre of her husband. That most cruel of all modern Hindu institutions finds no sanction in the *Rig Veda*. There is a perfectly harmless passage (X, 18, 7), which refers to a procession of women at a funeral ceremony. The passage may be thus translated :—

"May these women not suffer the pangs of widowhood. May they who have good and desirable husbands, enter their

houses with collyrium and butter. Let these women, without shedding tears, and without any sorrow, first proceed to the house, wearing valuable ornaments."

There is not a word in the above relating to the burning of widows. But a word in it *Agre* was altered into *Agne*, and the text was then mistranslated and misapplied in Bengal to justify the modern custom of the burning of widows. In the words of Max Muller, "This is, perhaps, the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood. Here have thousands lives been sacrificed and a fanatical rebellion been threatened on the authority of a passage which was mangled, mistranslated, and misapplied."

CHAPTER VI

VEDIC RELIGION

The religion of the Rig Veda is well known. It is pre-eminently the worship of Nature in its most imposing and sublime aspects. The sky which bends over all, the beautiful and blushing dawn which like a busy housewife wakes men from slumber and sends them to their work, the gorgeous tropical sun which vivifies the earth, the air which pervades the world, the fire which cheers and enlightens us, and the violent storms which in India usher in those copious rains which fill the land with plenty,—these were the gods whom the early Hindus loved to extol and to worship. And often when an ancient Rishi sang the praises of any of the gods with devotion and fervour, he forgot that there was any other god besides, and his sublime hymn has the character and the sublimity of a prayer to the one God of the universe. This is what makes many scholars often pause and hesitate before they give the Vedic religion any other name than Monotheism, Indeed the Rishis themselves often rose higher than the level of Nature-worship, and they boldly declared that the different gods were but different manifestations or different names of the one Primal Cause. The landmarks between Nature-worship and Monotheism have been passed, and the great Rishis of the Rig Veda have passed from Nature up to Nature's God.

The sky was naturally the most prominent object of worship, and as the sky assumes various aspects, various names were given to it, and the conception of various deities was formed. The oldest probably is *Dyu* (literally the shining), the *Zeus* of the Greeks, the first syllable of the *Jupiter* of the Romans, the *Tiu* of the Saxons, and the *Zio* of the Germans. This common name among many Aryan races indicates that the deity was worshipped by the ancestors of all those nations in their first primeval abode.

But while *Zeus* and *Jupiter* maintained their supremacy among the gods of Greece and Rome, in India he soon lost his place, and the sky in one of its peculiar functions

soon usurped his place. For in India the annual rise of rivers, the fertility of land, and the luxuriance of crops depend, not on the sky which shines above us, but on the *sky that rains*, and *Indra*, which means the rain-giver, soon became the first among the Vedic gods.

Another ancient name of the sky was Varuna, the Uranus of the Greeks. The word signifies to cover, and Varuna was the sky which covered the earth, probably the sky without light, the nightly sky. For we find another name for the bright sky of day, viz., *Mitra*, the *Mithra* of the *Zendavesta*. Sanscrit commentators naturally explain Varuna as night and *Mitra* as day, and the Iranians worshipped the sun under the name of *Mithra*, and gave the name of Varuna to a happy region, if not the sky.

These facts show that the idea and name of Varuna as god of sky was known to the ancestors of the Aryan nations before those nations separated and migrated to Greece, to Persia, and to India. Indeed the eminent German scholar Roth is of opinion that before the Indo-Aryans and the Iranians separated, Varuna was the highest and holiest of the gods of their ancestors, and represented the spiritual side of their religion. After the separation had taken place, this deity of righteousness was translated in Iran into *Ahura Mazd*, the supreme Deity. And although in India, Varuna yielded the foremost place among gods to the young and vigorous rain-giver *Indra*, still he never became divested of that sanctity and holiness which entered into his first conception, and the holiest hymns of the *Rig Veda* are his, not *Indra's*. Whatever be the value of those opinions, the fact of Varuna's pre-eminent sanctity in the *Rig Veda* cannot be denied, and we will give a few short translations from the hymns to Varuna to illustrate this :—

“6. O Varuna ! the birds that fly have not attained thy power, or thy vigour ; water which flows ceaselessly and the moving wind do not surpass thy speed.

“7. King Varuna of unsullied power remains in the firmament, and holds on high the rays of light. Those rays descend downwards, but proceed from above. May they sustain our existence.

"8. King Varuna has spread out the path for the course of the sun. He has made the path for the sun to traverse in pathless space. May he rebuke our enemies who pierce our hearts.

"9. O King Varuna ! a hundred and a thousand medicinal drugs are thine ; may thy beneficence be vast and deep. Keep unrighteousness away from us, deliver us from the sins we have committed.

"10. Yonder stars¹ which are placed on high, and are seen by night,—where do they go by day ? The acts of Varuna are irresistible ; the moon shines brightly by his mandate" (1, 24).

"3. O Varuna ; with an anxious heart I ask thee about my sins. I have gone to learned men to make inquiry ; the sages have all said to me,—'Varuna is displeased with thee.'

"4. O Varuna ! what have I done that thou wishest to destroy thy friend, thy worshipper ? O thou of irresistible power, declare it to me, so that I may quickly bend in adoration, and come unto thee.

"5. O Varuna ! deliver us from the sins of our fathers. Deliver us from the sins committed in our persons. O royal Varuna ! deliver Vasishtha, like a calf from its tether, like a thief who has feasted on a stolen animal.

"6. O Varuna ! all this sin is not wilfully committed by us. Error or wine, anger or dice, or even thoughtlessness, has begotten sin. Even an elder brother leads his younger astray, sin is begotten even in our dreams.

"7. Freed from sin, I will faithfully serve, as a slave, the Varuna who fulfils our wishes and supports us. We are

1. The word used in the text is Riksha, which may either mean stars generally, or the stars of the constellation Great Bear. The root *rich* means to shine, whence in course of time the word Riksha came to have two meanings—the shining stars of a particular constellation, and an animal with bright eyes and shining glossy hair. By a natural confusion of ideas, therefore, the constellation itself ultimately came to be called the Bear. The question is discussed with remarkable eloquence and learning by Max Muller in his *Science of Language*, and he explains that "the surprise with which many a thoughtful observer has looked at these seven bright stars, wondering why they were ever called the Bear, is removed by reference to the early annals of human speech."

ignorant, may the Arya god bestow on us knowledge. May the wise deity accept our prayer and bestow on us wealth" (VII, 86).

"1. O King Varuna ! may I never go to the earthen home. O thou of great power ! have mercy, have mercy.

"2. O Varuna with thy weapons ! I come trembling even like a cloud driven by the wind. O thou of great power ! have mercy, have mercy.

"3. O rich and pure Varuna ! I have been driven against righteous acts through weakness. O thou of great power ! have mercy, have mercy.

"4. Thy worshipper hath thirsted even when living in water. O thou of great power ! have mercy, have mercy.

"5. O Varuna ! we are mortals. In whatever way we have sinned against gods, in whatever manner we have through ignorance neglected thy work—O ! do not destroy us for these sins" (VII, 89).

These and many other hymns show that Varuna was never divested in India of that idea of holiness which is said to have entered into his original conception. But nevertheless, Varuna like Dyu was supplanted in power by the younger Indra, a god who is peculiarly Indian, and is unknown to other Aryan nations.

One of the most famous legends about Indra, the most famous legend probably in the Aryan world, is about the production of rain. The dark heavy clouds to which man looks up with wistful eyes, but which often disappoint him in seasons of drought, are called by the ancient name of Vritra.

Vritra is supposed to confine the waters, and will not let them descend until the sky-god or rain-god Indra strikes the monster with his thunderbolt. The captive waters then descend in copious showers, rivers rise almost instantaneously, and gods and men rejoice over the changed face of nature. Many are the spirited hymns in the Rig Veda in which this combat is narrated with much glee and rejoicing. The storm-gods, Maruts, help Indra in the combat, the sky and earth tremble at the noise, Vritra long wages an unequal combat, and then falls and dies,—the drought is over, and rains begin.

We have said that Indra is a peculiarly Indian name, and

is unknown to other Aryan nations. But the legend given above and the name of Vritra appear in various shapes among various Aryan nations. Vritraghna, or the slayer of Vritra, is worshipped in the Zendavesta as Verethraghna, and we also find in the same work an account of the destruction of Ahi, which in the Veda is another name for Vritra. Threyetana is the slayer of Ahi, and the genius of the great French scholar Burnouf has recognised this identical Threyetana in the Ferudin of Ferdusi's Shah Nama,—translated from mythology to history after thousands of years! It will probably surprise modern readers more to know that scholars have traced this Ahi of the Veda and the Zendavesta in the dragon Echis and Echidna of Greek mythology; that in the dog Orthros, the offspring of Echidna, they have recognised our old friend Vritra or the rain-cloud, and Hercules therefore, the slayer of Orthros, is the counterpart of Threyetana of the Zendavesta, and of Indra of the Rig Veda!

It would be easy to multiply such legends, but our limits forbid such a course. We will therefore only make a passing mention of one more legend viz., that about the recovery of light by Indra after the darkness of night. The rays of light are compared to cattle which have been stolen by the powers of darkness, and Indra (the sky) seeks for them in vain. He sends *Sarama*, i. e., the dawn, after them, and *Sarama* finds out the *Bilu*, or fortress where the *Panis*, or powers of darkness, have concealed the cattle. The *Panis* try to tempt *Sarama*, but in vain. *Sarama* comes back to Indra, and Indra marches with his forces, destroys the fort, and recovers the cattle; darkness is gone. and it is day! This is a well-known Vedic legend, and there are constant allusions to it in the hymns to Indra.

Max Muller maintains that the story of the siege of Troy is a development of this simple Vedic myth, and is "but a repetition of the daily siege of the East by the Solar powers that every evening are robbed of their brightest treasures in the west." Ilium according to Max Muller is *Bilu*, the cave or the fortress of the Rig Veda. Paris is the *Panis* of the Veda who tempt, and Helena is the Vedic *Sarama* who resists the temptation in the Veda, but succumbs to it in Greek mythology.

We cannot say that Max Muller has proved his theory, but the evidence of a historical siege of Troy does not necessarily disprove it, for nothing is more common in ancient history than the blending of mythical names and incidents with historical events. Arjuna the hero of a historical Kuru Panchala war is a myth, and is a name of the rain-god Indra ; it is not impossible that the poet who sang of historical siege of Troy blended with it a solar myth with its names and incidents. We will now make short extracts from the Rig Veda illustrating those two legends :—

“1. We sing the heroic deeds which were performed by Indra the thunderer. He destroyed Ahi (cloud) and caused rains to descend, and opened out the paths for the mountain streams to roll.

“2. Indra slayed Ahi resting on the mountains ; Twashtri had made the far-reaching thunderbolt for him. Water in torrents flowed towards the sea, as cows run eagerly towards their calves.

“3. Impetuous as a bull, Indra quaffed the Soma juice ; he drank the Soma libations offered in the three sacrifices. He then took the thunderbolt, and thereby slayed the eldest of the Ahis.

“4. When you killed the eldest of the Ahis, you destroyed the contrivances of artful contrivers. You cleared the sun and the morning and the sky, and left no enemies behind.

“5. Indra with his all-destructive thunderbolt slayed the darking Vritra (cloud), and lopped his limbs. Ahi now lies touching the earth like the trunk of a tree felled by the axe.

“6. The proud Vritra thought that he had no equal, and defied the destroyer and conqueror Indra to combat. But he did not escape destruction, and Indra's foe fell, crushing the rivers in his fall.

“8. Glad waters are bounding over the prostrate body as rivers flow over fallen banks, Vritra when alive had withheld water by his power ; Ahi now lies prostrate under that water.

“10. The prostrate body lies concealed and nameless

under ceaseless and restless waters, and the waters flow above. Indra's foe sleeps the long sleep" (I, 32),

The above is a hymn relating to the legend of Vritra. We now turn to a hymn relating to the legend of Sarama :—

1. The *Panis* say :—"O Sarama ! why hast thou come here ? It is a long distance. He who looks back cannot come this way. What have we with us for which thou hast come ? How long hast thou travelled ? How didst thou cross the Rasa ?"

2. *Sarama* replies :—"I come as the messenger of Indra. O *Panis* ! it is my object to recover the abundant cattle, which you have hidden. The water has helped me ; the water felt a fear at my crossing, and thus I crossed the Rasa."

3. The *Panis*,—"What is that Indra like, whose messenger thou art, and hast come from a long distance ? How does he look ? (To one another :) Let her come, we will own her as a friend. Let her take and own our cows."

4. *Sarama*.—"I do not see any one who can conquer the Indra whose messenger I am, and have come from a long distance. It is he who conquers everybody. The deep rivers cannot restrain his course. O *Panis* ! you will surely be slain by Indra and will lie down."

5. *Panis*.—"O beautiful *Sarama* ! thou hast come from the farthest ends of the sky ; we will give thee without any dispute these cows as thou desirest. Who else would have given the cattle without a dispute ? We have many sharp weapons with us."

9. *Panis*.—"O *Sarama* ! thou hast come here because the god threatened thee and sent thee here. We will accept thee as a sister ; do not return. O beautiful *Sarama* ! we will give thee a share of this cattle."

10. *Sarama*.—"I do not comprehend your words about brothers and sisters. Indra and the powerful sons of Angiras know all. They sent me here to guard the cattle until recovery. I have come here under their shelter. O *Panis* ! run away far from here" (X, 108).

It will be seen from the few extracts we have made that the hymns to Indra are characterised by force and vigour,

as those to Varuna are marked with a feeling of righteousness. Indra is, in fact, the most vigorous of the Vedic gods, fond of Soma wine, delighting in war, leading his comrades the Maruts to fight against drought, leading hosts of the Aryans against the black aborigines, and helping them to carve out for themselves with their strong right arm the most fertile spots along the five rivers of the Punjab. The sky and earth gave him birth as a cudgel for the enemies (III, 49, 1). The young and vigorous infant went to his mother Aditi for food, and saw Soma wine on her breast; he drank Soma before he drank from his mother's breast (III, 48, 2 and 3). And the great drinker and fighter often hesitates between the temptation of Soma libations at sacrifices, and the temptation of his home where a beautiful wife awaits him (III, 53, 4-6).

We have thus far spoken of Dyū and Varuna and Mitra and Indra as the principal sky-gods of the Rig Veda. All these gods may, however, also be considered as gods of light, as the idea of the bright light of sky enters into the conception of all these deities, even of Varuna in some passages. We will now, however, speak of some deities who have more distinctly a solar character, and some of whom are grouped together under the common name of Adityas or sons of Aditi, and this brings us to the most remarkable name that occurs in the Rig Veda mythology, Unlike Indra, which comes from *Ind* to rain, and Dyū, which comes from *Dyū* to shine, the word Aditi involves a more complicated idea. Aditi means the undivided, the unlimited, the eternal. It is in reality, as has been stated, the earliest name invented by man to express the Infinite,—the visible infinite, the endless expanse, beyond the earth, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky. The fact that such an idea should enter into the conception of a deity argues a remarkable advance in the culture and thought of the early Hindus. The word has no counterpart among the names of the deities of other ancient Aryan nations, and must have been coined in India after the Indo-Aryan section had settled in this country. It means, according to the eminent German scholar Roth, the eternal and inviolable principle, the celestial light.

There is much confusion in the Rig Veda as to who the

Adityas are,—the sons of this celestial light. In II, 27, Aryaman and Bhaga and Daksha and Ansa are named besides Varuna and Mitra, of whom we have spoken before. In IX, 114, and in X, 72, the Adityas are said to be seven in number, but are not named. We have seen before that Indra is called a son of Aditi. Savitri, the sun, is often described as an Aditya, and so are Pushan and Vishnu, who are also different names of the sun. When, in course of time, the year was divided into twelve months, the number of the Adityas was fixed at twelve, and they were the suns of the twelve months.

Surya and Savitri are the most common names of the sun in the Rig Veda, the former word answering to the Greek Helios, the Latin Sol, and the Iranian Khorshed. Commentators draw a distinction between Savitri, the rising or the unrisen sun, and Surya, the bright sun of day. The golden rays of the sun were naturally compared with arms until a story found its place in Hindu mythology that Savitri lost his arm at a sacrifice, and it was replaced by a golden arm. The same story reappears in a different form in German mythology, in which the sun-god placed his hand in the mouth of a tiger and lost it!

The only extract we will make from the hymns to the sun will be that most celebrated of all the verses in the Rig Veda, the Gayatri, or the morning hymn of the later Brahmans. But the Rig Veda recognised no Brahmans, the caste-system was not formed then, and the sublime hymn was the *national* property of the early Hindus who dwelt on the banks of the Indus. We give the original verse and Wilson's translation:—

*"Tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi
"Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat."*

"We meditate on the desirable light of the divine Savitri who influences our pious rites" (III, 62, 10).

Purshan is the sun as viewed by shepherds in their wanderings in quest of fresh pasture-lands. He travels in a chariot yoked with goats, guides men and cattle in their travels and migrations, and knows and protects the flocks. The hymns to Pushan, therefore, often breathe a simplicity which is truly pastoral. A few extracts from such hymns have been given before.

Vishnu has obtained such a prominent place as the Supreme Deity in later Hinduism that there is a natural reluctance among orthodox modern Hindus to accept him in his Vedic character as a mere sun-god. Yet such he is in the Rig Veda, and he is quite a humble deity in the Vedic pantheon, far below Indra or Varuna, Savitri or Agni. It was not till the Puranic times, long after the Christian Era, that Vishnu was considered a Supreme Deity. In the Veda, Vishnu is said to traverse space in three steps, viz, the sun at rising, at zenith, and at setting. In the Puranas this simple metaphor has led to a long story.

Fire was an object of worship among all ancient nations, and in India sacrificial fire received the highest regard. As no sacrifice could be performed without fire, Agni or fire was called the invoker of the gods. He was called Yavistha, or the "youngest" among the gods, because he was kindled anew at each time of sacrifice by the friction of *arani*, or the sacrificial wood. For this reason, he also received the name of Pramantha, i. e. produced by friction.²

So high was the esteem in which fire was held among the gods of the Rig Veda, that when the ancient commentator Yaska tried to reduce the number of the Vedic gods into three, he named Agni or fire as the god of the earth, Indra or Vayu as the god of the firmament, and the Sun as the god of the sky.

But Agni is not only the terrestrial fire in the Rig Veda; he is also the fire of the lightning and the sun, and his abode is the invisible heaven. The Bhrigus discovered him there, Matarisvan brought him down, and Atharvan and Angiras, the first sacrificers, first installed him in this world as the protector of men.

2. According to Cox, many of the Greek and Latin deities owe their name to the Sanscrit names of Fire. "In this name, Yavistha, which is never given to any other Vedic god, we may recognise the Hellenic Hephaistos. *Note*.—Thus with the exception of Agni, all the names of the Fire-gods were carried away by the Western Aryans; and we have Prometheus answering to Pramantha, Phoronus to Bharanyu, and the Latin Vulcanus to the Sanscrit Ulka."—Cox's *Mythology of Aryan Nations*.

"Agni is the god of fire; the Ignis of the Latins, the Ogni of the Slavonians."—Muir's *Sanscrit Texts*.

Vayu, or the air, has received less consideration from the Vedic bards, and there are but few hymns assigned to him. But the Maruts or the storm-gods are oftener invoked, as we have seen before, probably because they inspired more terror; and they are considered as the companions of Indra in obtaining rain from the reluctant clouds! The earth trembles as they move in their deer-yoked chariots, and men see the flashing of their arms or the sparkle of their ornaments, the lightning. But they are benevolent all the same, and they milk from the udder of their mothered Prisni (cloud) copious showers for the benefit of man.

Rudra, a fierce deity, is the father of the Maruts; loud-sounding as his name signifies, and a form of fire as the commentators Yaska and Sayana explain. There can be no doubt, therefore, as to the correctness of Roth's conclusion, that the original meaning of this loud-sounding fire, this father of storms, is Thunder. Like Vishnu, Rudra is a humble deity in the Rig Veda, and only a few hymns are assigned to him. But like Vishnu, Rudra has attained prominence in later times, and is one of the Hindu Trinity of the Puranic religion, and portion of the Supreme. In some of the Upanishads we find the names Kali, Karali, &c., used as the names of different kinds of flame and, and in the White Yajus Sanhita, we find Ambika spoken of as the sister of Rudra. But when Rudra assumed a more distinct individuality in the Puranas, all those names were construed as the different names of his wife! We have only to add that none of these goodesses, nor Lakshmi, the wife of Puranic Vishnu, is so much as mentioned by name in the Rig Veda.

Another god who has also changed his character in the Puranas (and very much for the worse!) is Yama, the king of the dead. In the Puranas he is called the child of the Sun, and there are some reasons (which Max Muller explains with his usual eloquence) for supposing that the original conception of Yama in the Rig Veda is the conception of the departing sun. The sun sets and disappears, just as a man's life ends: and the

imagination of a simple race would easily conjure up an after-world, where that departed deity would preside over departed spirits.

According to the Rig Veda, Vivasvat the sky is the father, and Saranyu the dawn is the mother, of Yama and his sister Yami.

Who can be the offspring of the sky and the dawn but the sun or the day? It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the twins Yama and Yami are day and night in their original conception. There is a curious passage in the Rig Veda in which the amorous sister Yami desires to embrace her brother as her husband, but the brother declines such union as unholy (X, 10). It is not difficult to fathom the import of this conversation :— Day and Night, though eternally pursuing each other, can never be united.

But whatever the original conception of Yama may be, there is no doubt that even in the Rig Veda itself, that deity has attained a distinct individuality, and he is the king of the departed. So far his Vedic character agrees with his Puranic character, but here the parallel ends. In the Veda, he is the beneficent king of the happy world where the virtuous live and enjoy themselves in after-life. Clothed in a glorious body, they sit by the side of Yama in the realms of light and sparkling waters, they enjoy endless felicity there, and are adored here below under the name of Pitris or fathers. How different is the character which Yama bears in the Puranas as the cruel and dread Punisher of the guilty!

“1. Worship the son of Vivasvat with offerings. All men go to him. He takes men of virtuous deeds to the realm of happiness. He clears the way for many.

“2. Yama first discovered the path for us. That path will not be destroyed again. All living beings will, according to their acts, follow by the path by which our forefathers have gone” (X, 14).

We may also quote here another passage from a hymn to Soma, which contains a fuller allusion to the future world. Soma, it is well known, was the juice of a plant made into wine, used as libation in sacrifices. Soma

soon attained the rank of a deity, and all the hymns of the ninth Mandala are dedicated to him.

"7. O flowing Soma! take me to that immortal and imperishable abode where light dwells eternal, and which is in heaven. Flow, Soma! for Indra.

"8. Take me where Yama is king, where there are gates of heaven, and where mighty rivers flow. Take me there and make me immortal. Flow, Soma! for Indra.

"9. Take me where there is the third heaven, where there is the third realm of light above the Sky, and where one can wander at his will. Take me there and make me immortal. Flow, Soma! for Indra.

"10. Take me where every desire is satiated, where Pradhma has his abode, where there is food and contentment. Take me there and make me immortal. Flow, Soma! for Indra.

"11. Take me where there are pleasures and joys and delights, where every desire of the anxious heart is satiated. Take me there, and make me immortal. Flow, Soma! for Indra" (IX, 113).

We have spoken above of Yama and Yami as the twin children of Vivasvat the sky, by Saranyu the dawn. It is remarkable that the same parents had another twin children, the two Asvins. There can be little doubt that they too, like Yama and Yami, were in their original conception the day and the night, or the dawn and the evening.

But whatever the original conception of the Asvins may be, they appear in the Rig Veda as great physicians, healers of the sick and the wounded, and tending many persons with kindness. Long lists of the kind acts of the two Asvins are given in several hymns, and the same curses are spoken of over and over again. On their three-wheeled chariot, they make the circuit of the world day by day, and succour men in their distress.

Brihaspati or Brahmanaspati is the lord of hymns, Brahman in the Rig Veda meaning hymn. The conception of this deity arose in much the same way as the conception of the deities Fire and Soma. As there is power in the flame and the libation of the sacrifice, so there is power in the prayer

uttered ; and this power of prayer is personified in the Vedic god Brahmanaspati.

He is quite a humble god in the Rig Veda, but has a great future. For in course of centuries, the thinkers of the Upanishads conceived of a Supreme Universal Being, and gave him the Vedic name Brahman. Then when Buddhism flourished in the land, the Buddhists themselves tolerated Brahma as a gentle and beneficent spirit in their pantheon. And when at last Puranic Hinduism supplanted Buddhism in India, the Puranic thinkers gave the name of Brahma to the Supreme Creator of the Universe. Thus, by looking into our national records of the farthest antiquity, we trace the simple beginnings of that gorgeous Puranic mythology which has for over a thousand years swayed the opinions and conduct of hundreds of millions of our countrymen and country-women. It is like tracing one of our great Indian rivers, which spreads for miles together at its mouth, to its very source, where a narrow but pure and crystal streamlet issues from the eternal mountains ! Ideas develop in the course of time, just as rivers expand and receive fresh supplies of water in their course, until they lose all their primitive character, although still bearing the same names. And we can no more recognise the simple Vedic character of Brahman the prayer, of Vishnu the sun, and of Rudra the thunder, in the Supreme Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of the Puranas, than we can recognise the crystal streamlet at Hardwar in the sea-like expanse of the Ganges where it mingles with the Bay of Bengal.

These are the important gods of the Rig Veda. Of the goddesses there are only two who have any marked individuality, viz., Ushas, the dawn, and Sarasvati, the goddess of the river of that name, and afterwards the goddess of speech.

There is no lovelier conception in the Rig Veda than that of the dawn. There are no hymns in the Veda more truly poetical than those dedicated to her, and nothing more charming is to be found in the lyrical poetry of any ancient nation. We can make room here for only a few extracts :—

“20. What mortal knoweth thee, O immortal Ushas, fond of our praise ! Whom, O mighty one, dost thou favour ?”

"21. Far-extending, many-tinted, brilliant Ushas ! we know not thy abode, whether it be nigh or remote.

"22. Daughter of the sky ! accept these offerings, and perpetuate our welfare" (I, 30).

"7. She, the young, the white-robed daughter of the sky, the mistress of all earthly treasure, dawns upon us, dissipating darkness ! Auspicious Ushas ! shine upon us to-day on this spot.

"8. Following the path of mornings that have passed, to be followed by endless mornings to come, bright Ushas dispels darkness, and awakens to life all beings, unconscious like the dead in sleep.

"10. How long have the Dawns risen ? How long will the Dawns arise ? The present morning pursues those that are gone, future mornings will pursue this resplendent Ushas.

"11. Mortals who beheld the pristine Ushas have passed away ; we behold her now ; and men will come after us who will behold Ushas in the future" (I, 113).

"4. Ahana gently proceeds to every house ; she comes ever diffusing light, and blesses us and accepts our offerings.

"11. Radiant as a bride decorated by her mother, thou displayest thy person to the view. Auspicious Ushas ! remove the investing darkness ; no other dawns but thee will disperse it" (I, 123).

The Dawn was known by various names, and most of these names and the legends connected with them were brought by the Hindus from their original abode, since we find phonetical equivalents of these names, and a repetition of some of the legends too, in Greek mythology. Ushas is the Eos of the Greeks and the Aurora of the Latins. Arjuni, according to philologists, is the Greek Argynoris, Brisaya is Briseis, and Dahana is Daphne, Sarama is phonetically equivalent to the Greek Helena. Saranyu the mother of Yama and of the Asvins, is the Greek Erinyes, and Ahana is the renowned goddess Athena,

We have already alluded to the legend of Saranyu running away from her husband Vivasvat, and then giving birth to the twin Asvins. We find the same legend among the Greeks who believed in Erinyes Demeter running away in the same manner,

and giving birth to the Areion and Despoina. The idea in both cases is the same ; it is the dawn or gloaming disappearing as the day and night advance. The same idea has given rise to another beautiful Greek legend whose origin, too, we trace in the Rig Veda. In many passages (I, 115, 2, for instance), we find allusions to the sun pursuing the dawn as a man pursues a woman. The Greek Apollo in the same way pursues the Greek Daphne, until she is metamorphosed, i. e., the dawn disappears !

Sarasvati, as her name signifies, is the goddess of the river of the name, which was considered holy because of the religious rites performed on its banks and the sacred hymns uttered there. By a natural development of ideas, she was considered the goddess of those hymns, or in other words the goddess of speech, in which character she is worshipped now. She is the only Vedic goddess whose worship continues in India to the modern day ; all her modern companions, Durga, Kali, Lakshmi, and others, are creations of a later day.

Such is the nature-worship of the Rig Veda ; such were the gods and goddesses whom our forefathers worshipped four thousand years ago on the banks of the Indus. The conception of the nature-gods and the single-hearted fervency with which they were adored, argue the simplicity and vigour of a manly race, as well as the culture and thoughtfulness of a people who had already made a considerable progress in civilisation. And the very conception of the Vedic gods argues an elevated sentiment, a high tone of morality in the men who conceived such deities. As M. Barth justly observes, the Vedic gods are masters close at hand, and require a due performance of duty by man. "He must be sincere towards them, for they cannot be deceived. Nay he knows that they in turn do not deceive, and that they have a right to require his affection and confidence as a friend, a brother, a father.....How could it be permitted to men to be bad when the gods are good, to be unjust while they are just, to be deceitful when they never deceive ? It is certainly a remarkable feature of the hymns that they acknowledge no wicked divinities, and no mean and harmful practices.....We must acknowledge then that the hymns give evidence of an exalted and comprehensive morality,

and that in striving to be 'without reproach before Aditi and the Adityas,' the Vedic minstrels feel the weight of other duties besides those of multiplying offerings to the gods."¹

There are no indications in the Rig Veda of any "temples reared by mortal hands" and consecrated as places of worship. On the contrary, every householder, every patriarch of his family, lighted the sacrificial fire in his own home, and poured libations of the Soma-juice, and prayed to the gods for happiness to his family, for abundant crops and wealth and cattle, for immunity from sickness, and for victory over the black aborigines. There was no separate priestly caste, and men did not retire into forests, and subject themselves to penances in order to meditate on religion, and chant these hymns. On the contrary, the old Rishis,—the real Rishis as we find them in the Rig Veda, and not the fabled ones of whom we have legendary accounts in the Puranas,—were worldly men, men with considerable property in crops and in cattle and surrounded by large families, men, who in times of danger exchanged the plough for the spear and the sword, and defended against the black barbarians those blessings of civilisation which they solicited from their gods, and secured with so much care.

But though each householder was himself the priest, the warrior and the cultivator, yet we find evidence of kings performing rites on a large scale by help of men specially proficient in the chanting of hymns and other religious rites, and engaged and paid for the purpose. And as we go towards the later hymns of the Rig Veda, we find this class of professional priests gaining in reputation and in wealth, honoured by chiefs and kings, and rewarded by gifts of cattle and cars. We find mention of particular families specially proficient in the performance of religious rites, and in the composition of hymns; and it is probable that the existing hymns of the Rig Veda were composed by members of these families, and were traditionally learnt by rote and preserved in those families.

The hymns of Rig Veda are divided into ten *Mandalas*, so arranged according to the Rishis by whom they were composed.

1 *The Religions of India* (translation.) p. 32 et seq.

The first and the last Mandalas contain hymns composed by numerous Rishis, but the remaining eight Mandalas belong, each of them, to a particular Rishi, or rather to a particular house or school of Rishis. As we have stated before, the second Mandala is a collection of hymns composed by Gritsamada of the house of Bhrigu, the third Mandala belongs to Visvamitra, the fourth Mandala belongs to Vamadeva, the fifth to Atri, the sixth to Bharadvaja, the seventh to Vasishtha, the eighth to Kanva, and the ninth to Angiras. All these names are familiar to modern Hindus through the numberless legends which have surrounded them in Puranic times, and modern Hindus still love to trace their descent from these ancient and revered houses. We shall have something to say about these Rishis and their legends in our next chapter.

It is to these and other venerable houses that the Aryan world owes the preservation of the most ancient compositions of the Aryan race. From century to century the hymns were handed down without break or intermission, and the youths of the priestly houses spent the prime of their life in learning by rote the sacred songs from the lips of their grey-headed sires. It was thus that the inestimable treasure, the Rig Veda, was preserved for hundreds of years.

In course of time the priests boldly grappled with the deeper mysteries of nature, they speculated about creation and about the future world, and they resolved the nature-gods into the Supreme Deity.

"1. That all-wise Father saw clearly, and after due reflection created the sky and the earth in their watery form, and touching each other. When their boundaries were stretched afar, then the sky and the earth became separated.

"2. He who is the Creator of all is great; he creates and supports all, he is above all and sees all. He is beyond the seat of the seven Rishis. So the wise men say, and the wise men obtain fulfilment of their desires.

"3. He who has given us life, he who is the Creator, he who knows all the places in this universe—he is one although he bears the names of many gods. Other beings wish to know of him.

"7. You cannot comprehend him who has created all this ; he is incomprehensible to your mind. People make guesses, being shrouded in a mist ; they take food for the support of their life, and utter hymns and wander about" (X, 82).

The subline hymn teaches us in unmistakeable words that that different Vedic gods are but different *names* of One incomprehensible Deity. We quote another such hymn below.

"1. At that time what is, was not, and what is not, was not. The earth was not, and the far-stretching sky was not. What was there that covered ? Which place was assigned to what object ? Did the inviolate and deep water exist ?

"2. At that time death was not, nor immortality ; the distinction between day and night was not. There was only ONE who lived and breathed without the help of air, supported by himself. Nothing was, except HE.

"3. At first darkness was covered in darkness. All was without demarcation ; all was of watery from. The world that was a void was covered by what did not exist and was produced by meditation.

"4. Desire arose in the mind, the cause of creation was thus produced. Wise men reflect, and in their wisdom ascertain the birth of what is from what is not.

"5. Males with generating seed were produced, and powers were also produced. Their rays extended on both sides and below and above, a self-supporting principle beneath, an energy aloft.

"6. Who knows truly ? Who will describe ? When was all born ? Whence were all these created ? *The gods have been made after the creation.* Who knows whence they were made ?

"7. Whence all these were created, from from whom they came, whether any one created them or did not create, —is only known to Him who lives as Lords in the highest place. If He knows not (no one else does)") (X, 129).

Such is the first recorded attempt among the Aryan nations of the earth to pierce into the mysteries of creation ; such are the bold and sublime if vague ideas which dawned in the minds of our forefathers thousands of years ago, regarding the com-

mencement of this great universe. One more hymn we will quote here, a remarkable hymn, showing, again, how the later Rishis soared beyond the conception of the nature-gods to the sublime idea of One Deity :—

“1. In the beginning the Golden Child existed. He was the Lord of all from his birth. He placed this earth and sky in their respective places. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“2. Him who has given life and strength ; whose will is obeyed by all the gods ; whose shadow is immortality and whose slave is death. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“3. Him who by his power is the sole king of all the livings that see and move ; him who is the Lord of all bipeds and quadrupeds. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“4. Him by whose power these snowy mountains have been made, and whose creations are this earth and its oceans. Him whose arms are these quarters of space. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“5. Him who has fixed in their places this sky and this earth ; him who has established the heavens and the highest heaven ; him who has measured the firmament. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“6. Him by whom the sounding sky and earth have been fixed and expanded ; him whom the resplendent sky and earth own as Almighty ; him by whose support the sun rises and gains its lustre. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“7. Mighty waters pervaded the universe, they held in their womb and gave birth to fire. The One Being, who is the life of the gods, appeared. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“8. He who by his own prowess controlled the waters which gave birth to energy, he who is the Lord above all gods, he was One. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“9. He, the True, who is the creator of this earth, who is the creator of the sky, who is the creator of the glad and mighty waters,—may he not do us harm. Whom shall we worship with offerings ?

“10. O Lord of creatures ! None but thee has produced all these created things. May the object with which we

worship be fulfilled. May we acquire wealth and happiness” (X, 121).

We now see the force of the remark that the religion of the Rig Veda travels from Nature up to Nature's God. The worshipper appreciates the glorious phenomena of nature, and rises from these phenomena to grasp the mysteries of creation and its great Creator.

CHAPTER VII

VEDIC RISHIS

We have stated in the last chapter that certain pious and learned families obtained pre-eminence in the Vedic Period by their knowledge of performing religious sacrifices and their gift of composing hymns ; that kings delighted to honour and reward these families ; and that it is to them that the Aryan world is indebted for handing down the Vedic hymns from generation to generation. Modern Hindus take a pride in tracing their decent from these ancient families, and their names are a household word in modern Hindu society. Some account of these ancient Rishis,—the revered pioneers of the Hindu religion,—will therefore not be unwelcome to Hindu readers,

Pre-eminent among the Vedic Rishis, or rather Rishi families, stand the Visvamitras and the Vasishthas. The learned and industrious scholar Muir has, in the first volume of his "Sanskrit Texts," collected many legends about these Rishis from later Sanskrit literature ; but there is no Hindu who has not heard from his boyhood innumerable legends of this kind, connected with those revered names.

The Vasishthas and the Visvamitras were both honoured by the powerful conqueror, Sudas. The hymns of the third Mandala are ascribed to the Visvamitras, and in the 53rd hymn we find the following passage : "The great god-born, god-commissioned Rishi, the beholder of men, has stayed the watery current. When Visvamitra sacrificed for Sudas, then Indra was propitiated through the Kausikas." Again, the hymns of the seventh Mandala are ascribed to the Vasishthas, and in the 33rd hymn we find the following passages : "The Vasishthas in white robes, with their hair knots on the right, devoted to sacred rites, have gladdened me. Rising up, I call the people round the sacrificial grass. Let not the Vasishthas depart from my door."

There was naturally some jealousy between these two priestly houses, and hard words were exchanged, The following

Verses in III, 53, are said to contain an imprecation against the Vasishthas :—

“21. Indra, approach us to-day with many excellent succour : be propitious to us. May he who hates us fall low ; and let the breath of life forsake him whom we hate,

“22. As the tree suffers from the axe, as the Simbala flower is broken, as the cauldron boiling over casts forth foam, so may the enemy, O Indra.

“23. The might of the destroyer is not perceived. Men lead away the Rishi as if he were a beast, The wise do not condescend to ridicule the fool. They do not lead the ass before the horse.

“24. These Bharatas have learnt to turn away from, not to associate with (the Vasishthas). They urge the horse against them as against a foe. They bear about the bow in battle.”

Vasistha is supposed to have hurled back the imprecation in the following verses of VII, 104 :—

“13. Soma does not bless the wicked nor the ruler who abuses his power. He slays the demon ; he slays the untruthful man ; both are bound by the fetters of Indra.

“14. If I had worshipped false gods, or if I had called upon the gods in vain,—but why art thou angry with me, O Jatavedas ? May vain talkers fall into thy destruction.

“15. May I die at once if I be a Yatudhana, or if I hurt the life of any man. But may he be cut off from his ten friends who falsely called me a Yatudhana.

“16. He who called me a Yatudhana, when I am not so, or who said I am a bright devil,—May Indra strike him down with his great weapon, may he fall the lowest of all beings.”

So far the jealousy of the two angry priests is intelligible and even natural, however unbecoming of their great learning and sanctity. But when we proceed from the Rig Veda to later Sanscrit literature, incidents which are human and natural become lost in a cloud of miraculous and monstrous legends.

It is assumed from the commencement in these later legends that Vasishtha was a Brahman and Visvamitra was a Kshatriya, although the Rig Veda justifies no such assumption and knows no Brahmans and Kshatriyas as castes. On the

contrary, Visvamitra is the composer of some of the finest hymns cherished by later Brahmans, including the sacred Gayatri, the morning prayer of modern Brahmans.

Having assumed that Visvamitra was born a Kshatriya, the Mahabharata, the Harivansa, the Vishnu Purana, and other later works repeat an amusing story to account for the sage's attaining Brahmanhood. Satyavati, a Kshatriya girl, had been married to Richika a Brahman. Richika prepared a dish for his wife, which would make her conceive a son with the qualities of a Brahman, and another dish for his mother-in-law (a Kshatriya's wife), which would make her conceive a son with the qualities of a Kshatriya. The two ladies, however, exchanged dishes ; and so the Kshatriya's wife conceived and bore Visvamitra with the qualities of a Brahman, and the Brahman's wife Satyavati bore Jamadagni, whose son, the fiery Parasurama, though a Brahman, became a renowned and destructive warrior ! Such were the childish stories which the later writers had to invent to remove the difficulty they had created for themselves by assuming that Vedic Rishis belonged to particular castes !

In the celebrated legend of Harischandra, Visvamitra appears as a rapacious Brahman. He not only made the king give up his whole empire, but compelled him to sell his queen, his boy, and himself as slaves to pay the inexorable Brahman's fee ! If such stories are invented to teach respect and duty due to Brahmans, they fail in their object and inspire other sentiments. The bereaved Harischandra was, however, rewarded in the end, and Visvamitra anointed his son as king, and Harischandra went to heaven. Vasishtha became angry and cursed Visvamitra to be a Vaka or crane, and Visvamitra, too, transformed Vasishtha into an Ari bird ! The two birds began a furious contest which shook the whole world, until Brahma had to interpose, and restored the saints to their own forms, and reconciled them !

In the legend of Trisanku, we are told that, that prince wished to go bodily to heaven. Vasishtha declared the thing impossible, and in return for the king's angry words changed him to a Chandala. The fiery Visvamitra now appeared on the scene. He declared the thing quite possible, and began a

great sacrifice and proceeded with it in spite of Vasishtha's absence. Trisanku ascended to heaven, but Indra refused to receive him, and threw the intruder, head downwards, towards the earth. The irrepressible Visvamitra, however, threatened to create another heaven with Indra and gods and stars ! The gods had to give in, and Trisanku ascended to heaven, and shone like a star beyond the sun's course, but in a somewhat uncomfortable position, with his head still downwards !

In various other legends, which have almost become household stories for Hindu boys and girls, these two sages continually appear, in defiance of chronology and date, and are always at enmity with each other. The rival priests appear in courts of kings, twenty, thirty, or fifty generations removed from each other, and there is hardly a classical composition of note about a royal house or a semi-divine hero in which we do not find mention of Vasishtha and Visvamitra, eternally the rivals of each other. Thus the Vishnu Purana makes Visishtha the priest of Ikshvaku's son Nimi, as well as the priest of Sagara, who was thirty-seventh in descent from Ikshvaku ; and the Ramayana makes Vasishtha the priest of Rama, who was sixty-first in descent from Ikshvaku ! Such is the use which later romancers have made of the simple materials furnished by the Rig Veda, and such is the manner in which they have piled story upon story, and myth upon myth in connection with incidents which in the ancient Veda are simple, natural, and human. Not only the Rishis of the Veda, but every deity, and we may almost say every simile or allegory in the Rig Veda about a natural phenomenon, have received such treatment in the hands of the later imaginative Hindus.

But while hundred wild stories were invented in later days to account for Visvamitra's attaining Brahmanhood, there was no thought of denying that accepted fact. Every legend, every learned disquisition, every childish tale, every great work, from the Mahabharata to Manu and the Puranas,— admit that Visvamitra was a Kshatriya and a Brahman. Yudhisthira in the Anusasana Parva (section 3 of the Mahabharata) inquires of Bhishma how Visva-

mitra had not only become a Brahman but had established "the great and wise family of the Kusikas, *which included Brahmans and hundreds of Brahman Rishis.*" The question would be a difficult one to answer in the Puranic Age in which the Mahabharata received its last touches, The question would not be difficult of solution in the Epic Age when the caste-system was still a pliable institution. And the question would not arise at all in the Age of Visvamitra himself, *i.e.*, in the Vedic Age, when caste as such did not exist.

From the legends of the Visvamitras and the Vasihs-
thas, let us now turn to the scarcely less renowned houses
of the Angirases, the Vamadevas, the Bharadvajas, and the
Bhrigus. All those were families of Vedic Rishis, composers
of Vedic hymns ; and later writers therefore feel somewhat
uncertain about their caste. They are sometimes called
Brahmans with the character of Kshatriyas, sometimes
Kshatriyas with the character of Brahmans ; and occasionally
the bold truth is conjectured that these Rishis lived before
the institution of caste was formed.

The Angirases are the reputed authors of the ninth Mandala
of the Rig Veda. About the Angirases, the Vishnu Purana
(IV, 2, 2,) has the following : "The son of Nabhāga was
Nābhāga ; his son was Ambarisha ; his son was Virupa ;
from him sprang Prishadasva, and from him Rathinara. On
this subject there is this verse : These persons, *descended
from a Kshatriya stock and afterwards known as Angirases,*
were the chief of Rathinaras, *Brahmans possessing also the
character of Kshatriyas.*"

Vamadeva and Bharadvaja are reputed to be the authors of
the fourth and sixth Mandalas of the Rig Veda. The Matsya
Purana includes them (section 132) among the Angirases
of whom we have spoken before.

To the Gritsamadas are attributed the hymns of the second
Mandala of the Rig Veda. The commentator Sayana says of
him that he was formerly of the Angiras race, but he after-
wards became Gritsamada, of the Bhrigu race. This somewhat
mystic legend is elaborated in the Mahabharata, Anusasana
Parva (Section 30), in which we are told that Vitahavya, a

Kshatriya king, had taken shelter with Bhrigu, and Bhrigu, in order to save the fugitive from his pursuer, stated "there is no Kshatriya here, all these are Brahmans." The word of Bhrigu could not prove untrue, and the fugitive Kshatriya Vitahavya forthwith bloomed into Brahmanhood and became Gritsamada ! It must be allowed that this was an easier process than the penance of thousands of years which Visvamitra is said to have performed,—not to mention that his mother had exchanged dishes with a Brahman's wife!

But the story of Gritsamada's change of caste is not universally accepted. The Vishnu Purana and the Vayu Purana conjecture the bold truth that Gritsamada lived before the caste institution was formed. "From Gritsamada was descended Saunaka, who originated the four castes" (*Vish. Pur.*, IV, 8),

Lastly, let us turn to the Kanvas and the Atris. The Kanvas are the authors of the eighth Mandala of the Rig Veda, and we find the same uncertainty about their caste. The Vishnu Purana (IV, 19), and the Bhagavata Purana (IX, 20, 6, 7,), mention that Kanva was a descendant of Puru, a Kshatriya. Nevertheless the Kanvas were regarded as Brahmans. "From Ajamidha sprang Kanva, and from him Medhatithi, from whom were descended the Kanvanaya Brahmans" (*Vish. Pur.*, IV, 19).

The Atris are the reputed authors of the fifth Mandala of the Rig Veda, and we find the same uncertainty about their caste also. Thus the Vishnu Purana (IV, 6), calls Atri the grandfather of Pururavas, who belonged to the Kshatriya race.

These extracts are enough. They are made from works composed or received two or three thousand years after the time of the Vedic Rishis, but those extracts enable us to comprehend the status and position of the Vedic religious leaders and warriors, and are therefore not out of place in an account of the Vedic Period. Writing at such a long distance of time from the Vedic Age the modern authors often misapprehended ancient facts and traditions. But nevertheless the unswerving loyalty to the past which has ever characterised Hindu writers prevented them from tampering

with such traditions. Those traditions pointed to a state of society which had long passed away, and which had become almost unintelligible. Puranic writers could scarcely comprehend that priests and warriors could spring, from the same race, that a Rishi could be a warrior, or that a warrior could be a priest. They tried to explain such traditions by a hundred different theories and legends, but nevertheless they have faithfully and piously handed down the traditions unchanged and unaltered. Thus, to make only one more extract, the Matsya Purana enumerates 91 Vedic Rishis, and concludes with the following suggestive passage, (section 132):—"Thus 91 persons have been declared by whom the hymns have been given forth. *They were Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas*, all sons of Rishis. They were the offspring of the Rishikas, sons of Rishis, Vedic Rishis."

Thus the Purana faithfully preserves the ancient tradition that the Vedic hymns were the common property of the entire Aryan population and when the writer tells us that the composers of those hymns were Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vasisyas, we have little difficulty in discovering in that statement a dim recollection of the truth that the hymns were composed by the undivided ancestors of those castes.

Modern writers have classed Rishis under three classes, viz., Devarshis, or saintly gods like Narada; Brahmarshis, or saintly Brahmans like Kanva of the Sakuntala drama; and Rajarshis, or saintly Kshatriyas like Janaka, king of the Videhas. The ancient Vedic Rishis did not answer to any of these classes, did not belong exclusively to any of these categories, and were therefore a standing puzzle to modern writers. Hence the numerous legends to account for what was unaccountable; and often in the midst of these wild conjectures, the modern writer made a bold guess after the truth, and maintained that the Vedic Rishis must have lived before caste was originated. We do not wonder at the theories and legends which were multiplied in such profusion; we admire the boldness with which the truth was sometimes conjectured.

For the rest, these invaluable traditions—that priests and warriors were descended from the same races, and that

the same Rishis were often both priests and warriors,—enable us to comprehend the true position of Vedic Rishis. For, divested of their miraculous and legendary character, what do those traditions indicate? They indicate that the venerable families of the olden times,—like those of the Vasishthas, the Visvamitras, the Angirases, and Kanvas,—furnished renowned warriors and eminent priests at the same time. A Percy or a Douglas might be an ambitious priest or a fiery warrior, and so might a Kanva or an Angiras. To be sure, the Hindu houses were pre-eminently priestly as the European houses were military, but *caste* was as unknown to the one as to the other. Many a baron of Mediæval Europe, whose name is still preserved in the history of the crusades, had his father or uncle, son or nephew, immured in the solitude of holy monasteries; and many a Vasishtha or Visvamitra, whose religious hymns we still cherish and revere, had his son or nephew engaged in the wars of the Vedic Period, in the unending contests against the aborigines of the soil. Those facts are proved by the text of the Rig Veda itself which we have quoted in a previous chapter; and they are confirmed by the legends and traditions which we have quoted in this chapter from later Sanscrit literature. The Vedic Rishis composed their hymns, fought their wars, and ploughed their fields; but were neither Brahmans, nor Kshatriyas, nor Vaisyas. The great Rishi houses of the Vedic Age furnished priests and soldiers, but were no more Brahmans or Kshatriyas than the Percies or Douglasses of Mediæval Europe were Brahmans or Kshatriyas.

BOOK II

EPIC PERIOD, B. C. 1400 TO 1000

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE OF THE PERIOD

We have closed our account of Vedic Age, when the Hindu Aryans gradually conquered and occupied the whole tract of the country watered by the Indus and its five tributaries. We have seen that the sole work of this period which remains to us is the collection of hymns known as the Rig Veda Sanhita, and we have also seen how those hymns illustrate the civilisation of the Vedic Period. We now proceed to describe the civilisation of the Epic period, when the Hindus crossed the Sutlej, moved down the basin of the Ganges and the Jumna, and founded powerful kingdoms along the entire valley as far down as modern Benares and North Behar. And as in the case of the Vedic Age, so in the case of the Epic Age, we will base our account on contemporaneous literature.

What is the contemporaneous literature of the Epic Age? And what is the contemporaneous literature of the Philosophical or Rationalistic age that followed? The Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads, which constantly refer to the actions of the Kurus, the Panchalas, the Kosalas, and the Videhas *living in the valley of the Ganges*, form the literature of the Epic Age. The Sutras, which presuppose the rise of rationalism in India, and which were composed when the Aryans *had expanded all over India*, form the literature of the Rationalistic Age.

About thirty years ago Max Muller published his great work on Sanscrit literature, and gave reasons, which have since generally been accepted, for considering the mass of Sutra literature as subsequent to the Brahmana literature. He showed that the Sutra literature, presupposed and quoted from the Brahmana literature, and the converse was never

the case, He showed that the Brahmana literature reflected an age of priestly supremacy and unquestioning obedience on the part of the people, which was anterior to the practical and philosophical and sceptical age of the Sutras. He showed that the Brahmana literature down to the Upanishads was considered *revealed* in India, while all Sutra works were ascribed to human authors. And he enforced these arguments by a wealth of illustrations and a degree of erudition which left nothing to be desired.¹

It is needless to say that we cannot enter into the details of these learned discussions. True to the plan of the present work, we will make only a few remarks not on the *literary*, but on the *historical* bearings of the facts stated above. What is the historical import of this sequence in the different classes of Ancient Sanscrit literature? What is the historical reason of this sequence? Why did the Ancient Hindus compose their works in one particular form, the Vedic hymns, for a number of centuries? Why did they gradually abandon that style of composition, and

x Later researches have confirmed the view. Not only are the Sutras of a particular school subsequent to the Brahmanas of the same school, but the body of the Sutra literature as a whole is subsequent to the body of the Brahmana literature. Thus, to quote one instance only, Buhler, who does not altogether agree with Max Muller on this point, nevertheless points out in his Introductions to the Dharma Sutras that those Sutras repeatedly quote from Brahmanas of different schools. He shows that Gautama's Dharma Sutra, which is the oldest extant, presupposes an Aranyaka of the Black Yajur Veda, a Brahmana of the Sama Veda and even an Upanishad of the Atharva Veda! He points out that Vasishtha's Dharma Sutra quotes from a Brahmana of the Rig Veda, an Aranyaka of the Black Yajur Veda and a Brahmana of the White Yajur Veda, and also mentions an Upanishad of the Atharva Veda. So also Baudhayana's Dharma Sutra quotes from the Brahmanas both of the Black and the White Yajur Veda. On the other hand, no Brahmana ever quotes from any Sutra work.

No scholar maintains that the last Brahmana work was composed before the first Sutra work was written. But there can be little doubt on the evidence now before us, that there was a period when the *prevailing style* of writing was the prose style of the Brahmanas, and that this period was followed by a period when the *prevailing style* was aphorisms or Sutras.

write the prolix and dogmatic prose Brahmanas, for some succeeding centuries? And why again did they gradually change this for the concise aphorisms of the Sutras during the next few centuries? What is there in nature of things, that would induce the Ancient Hindus to take up different styles of composition at different periods of their history,—as if to afford the future historian a clue to the dates of their writings?

The question is more easily asked than answered. It may be answered, however, by a counter-question. What is there in the nature of things which prevented the Chronicles and Romances of Mediæval Europe being composed after the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries? Why did not Hume and Gibbon compose Chronicles? Why did not Fielding and Scott compose Mediæval Romances? The subjects were still the same;—why was the composition so different that it would be possible to demarcate the feudal ages from the modern period on the testimony of European literature, even if every vestige of European history was destroyed?

An Englishman would answer: It was impossible that Chronicles and feudal Romances should be continued after Elizabeth had reigned and Shakespeare and Bacon had written. A new light had dawned on Europe. The human mind had expanded. Religion was purified. A new world had been discovered. Modern philosophy had taken its rise. Commerce and maritime enterprise had received a wonderful development. Feudalism had died a natural death. The face of the European world had been changed.

Were it possible to bring before the reader the history of Hindu civilisation as vividly as he has before him the history of European civilisation, he would give similar replies with regard to the epochs of Indian History. It was impossible in the nature of things that Hymns like those of the Rig Veda should be composed after the Hindus had achieved the elaborate civilisation, and adopted the pompous religious rites of the Epic Period. The simple fervency with which the Punjab Aryans looked up to the Sky, the Dawn, or the Sun, had passed, once and for ever. Simple natural phenomena did not excite the wonder and religious admiration of the cultured

and somewhat artificial Gangetic Aryans engaged in solemn rites and pompous sacrifices. The fervent prayer to the rain-god Indra, or the loving address to the dawn-goddess Ushas, was almost impossible. The very import and object of the old simple hymns were forgotten, and sacrifices of various descriptions, from the simple morning and evening libations to the elaborate royal sacrifices lasting for many years, formed the essence of the later religion. The rule of the sacrifices, the import and object of every minute rite, the regulations for each insignificant observance,—these occupied the religious minds of the people, these formed the subjects of discussion between learned kings and royal priests, these formed the bulk of the Brahmana literature. It was as impossible for the cultured writers and thinkers of the day to go back to the buried past and disinter the simple faith of the Vedic-Hymns, as it was impossible for the erudite schoolmen of of Mediæval Europe to produce the wild and simple Norwegian Sagas of a bygone age.

Again, the elaborate and dogmatic trifling of scholastic philosophy of Europe was impossible after Descartes had lived and Bacon had written. In the same way, and for the same reason, the elaborate trifling of the Brahmanas were impossible in the Hindu world after Kapila had taught and Gautama Buddha had preached. The human mind in India had received a new impetus. A new world had been discovered beyond the Vindhya range, though the name of the Indian Columbus, who first planted the Hindu flag in a southern kingdom, is forgotten. The earnest and fervent Upanishads had been written, and marked a strong reaction against priestly pedantry. Kapila—the Descartes of India—had startled the Hindu world by his Sankhya philosophy; and Gautama—the Luther of India—had proclaimed a reformed faith for the poor and the lowly, and protested against the privileges of priests. New sciences had started into existence. A new light had dawned in the Hindu world.

The Brahmana literature died a natural death. The elaborate and unmeaning dogmas were left in the shade; the rules for the performance of the ancient sacrifices were condensed for practical purposes. It was a practical age,

when everything was condensed and codified. The rules of life were codified. Philosophy was condensed into aphorisms, science and learning in every department were condensed. Treatises were composed in every branch of human knowledge in a concise style, in which teachers could teach and learners could learn by rote. And thus it is that we have the entire literature of the Rationalistic Age in the shape of aphorisms,—of Sūtras.

This is the historical import of the three different classes of ancient Sanskrit literature, which represent three distinct epochs of Hindu history. The hymns reflect the manly simplicity of the Vedic Age. The Brahmanas reflect the pompous ceremonials of Epic Age, The Sūtras reflect the science and learning, and even the scepticism of the Rationalistic Age.

We have said before that the tide of Hindu colonisation rolled eastward and southward in each successive period, and the different classes of Sanskrit literature spoken of attest to this onward movement. In Europe feudal literature and modern literature were developed on the same arena, in Italy and Germany, in France and England. In India the case was different. For the Aryans of India went on conquering through successive periods, and the literature of each period speaks of the portion of India under the Aryan influence and domination in that particular period. This in itself is an invaluable index to the dates of the different classes of literature.

The hymns of the Rig Veda speak of the Punjab alone.—India beyond the Punjab is unknown to the Rig Veda. The banks of the distant Ganges and the Jumna are rarely alluded to; the scenes of all the wars and social ceremonies and religious sacrifices of the Rig Veda are the banks of the Indus and its tributaries and the Sarasvati. This was the Hindu world when the hymns were composed.

But the Hindus soon threw out colonies all over Northern India. In course of centuries these colonies rose into importance and were formed into powerful kingdoms, and by their progress and learning threw the mother-country, the Panjab, into the shade. In the Brahmanas we

hear of the mighty Kurus in the tract of the country round modern Delhi ; we hear of powerful Panchalas in the country round modern Kanouj ; we read of the Videhas in the country now known as North Behar ; we read of the Kosalas in Oudh ; and we read of Kasis in the country round modern Benares. The colonies developed pompous sacrificial rites, and had illustrious and learned kings like Janaka and Ajatasatru and Janamejaya Parikshita. They founded schools or parishads in villages and towns, and they developed a new social system based on caste distinctions. It is of these colonists and their civilisation that we mostly read in the Brahmans ;—the Punjab is almost forgotten, and Southern India is still unknown, or is referred to as the home of wild beasts and wild men.

And lastly, the Sutra literature makes us familiar with great Hindu kingdoms in Southern India, and some of the existing Sutras were composed in Southern India. Thus the countries and nations described by the different classes of literature point to their respective ages.

We have spoken of the Vedic Period and the Rig Veda Hymns in the First Book of this work. We will speak of the Epic Period and the Brahmana literature in this Second Book. And we will speak of the Rationalistic Period and the Sutra literature in the Third Book.

We have seen before that the Rig Veda^a Hymns were composed in the Vedic Age and were finally compiled in the Epic Age. The other three Vedas known as the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda (White and Black), and the Atharva Veda, were also compiled in this Epic Age.

The reasons which led to the compilation of the Sama Veda and the Yajur Veda have been ascertained with a fair degree of certainty. We find mention in the hymns of the Rig Veda of different classes of priests who performed different duties at sacrifices. The Adhvaryus were entrusted with the material performance of sacrifice. They measured the ground, built the altar, prepared the sacrificial vesseles, fetched wood and water, and immolated animals. The Udgatris, on the other hand, were entrusted with the duty of singing, as according to ancient custom some parts of the

sacrifice had to be accompanied by songs. The Hotris had to recite hymns. And lastly, the Brahmins presided at sacrifices over all the rest.

Of these four classes of priests, neither the Brahman nor the Hotri required any special manual. For the Brahman was required to know the entire ceremonial, to be able to superintend the performance of the sacrifice, to advise the other priests on doubtful points, and to correct their mistakes. The hotri too had simply to recite, and if he knew the hymns of the Rig Veda, he did not require any separate compilation. But the duties of the Adhvaryu and the Udgatri required special training. Special sacrificial formulas must have existed for the former, and a stock of the Rig Veda Hymns, set to music, must have also existed for the latter in the Vedic Period, for we find the names Yajus and Saman in the Rig Veda Hymns. These formulas and chants were, however, separately collected and compiled at a later age, *i. e.*, in the Epic Period ; and these separate compilations, in the shape which they last took, are the Yajur Veda and the Sama Veda as we have them now.

No name has been handed down to us as the compiler of the Sama Veda. Benfey has pointed out, what Stevenson previously suspected, that all the verses of the Sama Veda, with the exception of a few, are to be found in the Rig Veda ; and it is supposed that these few verses too must have been contained in some other recension of the Rig Veda now lost to us. It is quite clear, therefore, that the Sama Veda is only a selection from the Rig Veda set to music for a special purpose.

Of the compilers of Yajur Veda, we have some information. The more ancient or Black Yajur Veda is called the Taittiriya Sanhita from Tittiri, who probably compiled or promulgated it in its present shape. In the Anukramani of the Atreya recension of this Veda, however, we are told that the Veda was handed down by Vaisampayana to Yaska Paingi, by Yaska to Tittiri, by Tittiri to Ukha, and by Ukha to Atreya. This would show that the existing oldest recension of the Yajur Veda was not the first recension.

We have fuller information with regard to the more recent

White Yajur Veda. It is called the Vajasaneyi Sanhita, from Yajnavalkya Vajasaneya, the compiler or promulgator of that Veda. Yajnavalkya held the influential position of chief priest in the court of Janaka, king of the Videhas, and the promulgation of this new Veda proceeded probably from the court of that learned king.

There is a striking difference in arrangement between the White Yajur Veda and the black Yajur Veda. In the latter, the sacrificial formulas are followed by dogmatic explanations, and by accounts of ceremonials belonging to them. In the former, the formulas only find place in the Sanhita, the explanation and the ritual being assigned to the Brahmana. It is not improbable, as has been supposed, that it was to improve the old arrangement, and to separate the exegetic matter from the formulas, that Yajnavalkya, of the court of Janaka, founded the new school known as the Vajasaneyins, and that their labours resulted in a new (Vajasaneyi) Sanhita and an entirely separate (Satapatha) Brahmana.

But although the promulgation of the White Yajur Veda is ascribed to Yajnavalkya, a glance at its contents will show that it is not the compilation of any one man or even of one age. Of its 40 chapters only the first 18 are cited in full and explained in due order in the first nine books of the Satapatha Brahmana; and it is the formulas of these 18 chapters only which are found in the older Black Yajur Veda. These 18 chapters then are the oldest portion of the White Yajur Veda, and may have been compiled or promulgated by Yajnavalkya Vajasaneya. The next 7 chapters are very likely a later addition. The remaining 15 chapters are undoubtedly a still later addition, and are expressly called Parisishta or Khila, i.e., supplement.

Of the Atharva Veda, we need only state that it was not generally recognised as a Veda till long after the period of which we are speaking, though a class of literature known as the Atharvangiras was growing up during the Epic Period, and is alluded to in the later portions of some of the Brahmanas. Throughout the first three Periods of Hindu history, and even in Manu and other metrical codes, three Vedas are generally recognised. And although the claims of the Atharvan were

sometimes put forward, still the work was not generally recognised as a fourth Veda till long after the Christian Era. Numerous passages recognising three Vedas only could be cited from the literature of the period of which we are now speaking ; but we are unable to make room for such passages. We will only refer our readers to some of them, viz., Aitareya Brahmana, V., 32 ; Satapatha Brahmana, IV, 6, 7 ; Aitareya Aranyaka, III, 2, 3 ; Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I, 5 ; and Chhandogya Upanishad, III and VII. In this last work, after the three Vedas are named, Atharvangiras is classed with Itihasa. It is only in the Brahmana and Upanishads of the Atharva Veda itself that we find a uniform recognition of this work as a Veda. For instance, it is the principal object of the Gopatha Brahmana to show the necessity of four Vedas, A carriage, we are told, does not proceed with less than four wheels, an animal cannot walk with less than four feet, nor can sacrifice be perfect with less than four Vedas ! Such special pleading only proves that the fourth Veda was not yet recognised generally, even in the comparatively recent times when the Gopatha Barhmana was composed.

Atharvan and Angiras are, as Whitney remarks, half mythical names of ancient and venerated Indian families, and it was sought to bring the recent Veda into connection with these ancient names ! The Veda is divided into twenty books, and contains nearly six thousand verses, and a sixth of this is in prose. Of the remaining, one-sixth is found among the hymns of the Rig Veda, mostly in the tenth book. The nineteenth book is a kind of supplement to the previous eighteen, while the twentieth book is made up of extracts from the Rig Veda.

The entire Veda principally consists of formulas intended to protect men against the baneful influences of divine powers, against diseases, noxious animals, and curses of enemies. It knows a host of "imps and hobgoblins," and offers homage to them to prevent them from doing harm. The hymns are supposed to bring from the unwilling hands of gods the favours that are wanted. Incantations calculated to procure long life or wealth or recovery from illness, and invocations for good luck in journeys, in gaming, &c., fill the work. Those hymns resemble similar hymns in the last book of the Rig Veda ;

only, as Weber has pointed out, in the Rig Veda they are apparently additions made at the time of the compilation, while in the Atharva Veda they are the natural utterance of the present.

We must now hasten to an account of compositions called Brahmanas, after which the literature of this Age has been named the Brahmana literature. We have seen that in the Black Yajur Veda the texts are as a rule followed by their dogmatic explanations. These explanations were supposed to elucidate texts and to explain their hidden meanings, and they contained the speculations of generations of priests. A single discourse of this kind was called a Brahmana; and in later times collections or digests of such discourses were called Brahmanas.

The Rig Veda has two Brahmanas, viz., the Aitareya and the Kaushitaki. The composition of the former is attributed to Mahidasa Aitareya, son of Itara. In the Kaushitaki Brahmana, on the other hand, special regard is paid to the sage Kaushitaka, whose authority is considered to be final. For the rest, these two Brahmanas seem to be only two recensions of the same work, used by the Aitaryins and the Kaushitakins respectively, and they agree with each other in many respects, except that the last ten chapters of the Aitareya are not found in the Kaushitaki, and belong probably to a later age.

The Sama Veda has the Tandya or Panchavinsa Brahmana, the Sadvinsa Brahmana, the Mantra Brahmana, and the better known Chhandogya.

The Black Yajur Veda or Taittiriya Sanhita has its Taittiriya Brahmana, and the White Yajur Veda or Vajasaneyi Sanhita has its voluminous Satapatha Brahmana. We have already stated that the Satapatha Brahmana is attributed to Yajñavalkya, though it is more likely the handiwork of the school he founded, as he is often quoted in the work. Nor does the work belong entirely to one school or to one age. On the contrary, as in the case of White Yajur Veda Sanhita so in the case of its Brahmana, there are reasons to think that the work belongs to different periods. The first 18 chapters of the Sanhita are the oldest part of the work, and the first nine books of the Brahmana, which comment on these 18 chapters, are the oldest

part of the Brahmana. The remaining five books are of later date than the first nine books.

The Atharva Veda has its Gopatha Brahmana, a comparatively recent production, the contents of which are a medley, derived to a large extent from other sources.

Next after the Brahmanas come the Aranyakas, which may, indeed, be considered as the last portions of the Barhmanas. They are so called, as Sayana informs us, because they had to be read in the forest, while the Brahmanas were for use in sacrifices performed by householders in their homes.

The Rig Veda has its Kaushitaki Aranyaka and its Aitareya Aranyaka, the latter ascribed to Mahidasa Aitareya. The Black Yajur Veda has its Taittiriya Aranyaka, and the last book of the Satapatha Brahmana is called its Aranyaka. The Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda have no Aranyakas.

What gives these Aranyakas a special importance, however, is, that they are the proper repositories of those celebrated religious speculations known as the Upanishads. The Upanishads which are the best known, and which are undoubtedly ancient, are the Aitareya and the Kaushitaki, found in the Aranyakas of those names, and belonging to Rig Veda; the Chhandogya and the Talavakara (or Kena) belonging to the Sama Veda; the Vajasaneyi (or Isa) and the Brihadaranyaka belonging to the White Yajur Veda; the Taittiriya and Katha and Svetasvatara belonging to the Black Yajur Veda; and the Mundaka and Prasna and Mandukya belonging to the Atharva Veda. These twelve are the ancient Upanishads to which Sankaracharya principally appeals in his great commentary on the Vedanta Sutras. But once after the Upanishads had come to be considered sacred and authoritative works, new compositions of the class began to be added, until the total number reaches 200 or more. The latter Upanishads, which are generally known as the Atharva Upanishads, come down as far as the Puranic times, and enter the lists in behalf of sectarian views, instead of being devoted to an inquiry into the nature of Brahman or the Supreme Spirit, like the old Upanishads. Indeed, the later Upanishads come down to a period long subsequent to the Mahomedan conquest of India, and the idea of a universal religion which was cherished by

the great emperor Akbar finds expression in an Upanishad called the Allah Upanishad ! We need hardly say that we will refer in this work only to the ancient Upanishads, and not to the later Upanishads.

With the Upanishads the Epic Period ends, and the so-called revealed literature of India ends also. Other classes of works, besides those named herein, undoubtedly existed in the Epic Period, but have now been lost to us, or more frequently replaced by newer works. A fragment only of the vast literature of the Epic Period has come down to us, and principal works which remain have been detailed above.

Of the Epics themselves, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, we will speak in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER II

KURUS AND PANCHALAS

The tide of Aryan conquests rolled onward. If the reader will refer to a map of India, he will find that from the banks of the Sutlej to the banks of the Jumna and the Ganges, there is not a very wide strip of country to cross. The Aryans, who had colonised the whole of the Punjab, were not likely to remain inactive on the banks of the Sutlej or of the Sarasvati. Already in the Vedic Period bands of enterprising colonists had crossed those rivers and explored the distant shores of the Jumna and the Ganges, and those noble streams, though alluded to in the hymns as on the very horizon of the Hindu world, were not unknown. In course of time the emigrants to the fertile banks of the two rivers must have swelled in number, until the colonists founded a powerful kingdom of their own in the country near modern Delhi,—the kingdom of the Kurus.

The colonists were no other than the Bharatas renowned in the wars of Sudas, but their kings belonged to the house of Kurus, and hence the tribe went by both names, Bharatas and Kurus. From what part of the Punjab the Kurus came, is a question still involved in obscurity. In the *Aitareya Brahmana* (VIII, 14), it is stated that the Uttara Kurus and the Uttara Madras lived beyond the Himalaya. In later works, the *Mahabharata* (I, 47, 19, &c.) and the *Ramayana* (IV, 44, 88, &c.) the land of the Uttara Kurus, has already become a mythical country. Uttara Kuru is identified with *Ottorakorra* of Ptolemy, and Lassen places the country somewhere east of modern Kashgar; but we would place the Uttara Kuru alluded to in the *Aitareya Brahmana* somewhere north of the Sub-Himalayan range, *i.e.*, in Kashmir. We assume that the colony of the Kurus on the Ganges rose to prowess and fame about 1400 B.C.

When the Hindus had once begun to colonise the fertile banks of the Jumna and the Ganges, swarms of the colonists

marched down the course of those streams and soon occupied the whole of the Doab, *i.e.*, the tract of country between those rivers. While we find the Kurus or Bharatas settling down in the country near modern Delhi, we find another adventurous tribe, the Panchalas, occupying the tract of country near modern Kanouj. The original seat of the Panchalas is still less known than that of the Kurus, and it has been supposed that they also came from the northern hills, like the Kurus. Their name, however, which means "Five tribes," would seem to indicate that they were of the Pancha-Krishti or Panchajana, "five cultivating tribes" of whom we read so often in the Rig Veda.

The Panchala kingdom probably rose to distinction about the same time as the kingdom of the Kurus, and the Brahmana literature frequently refers to these allied tribes as forming the very centre of the Hindu world, and renowned by their valour, their learning, and their civilisation. Many of the Brahmanas allude to the culture of their schools, the sanctity of their priests, the ostentatious religious sacrifices of their kings, and the exemplary lives of the people.

For centuries had elapsed since the Aryans had first settled on the banks of the Indus, and the centuries had done their work in progress and civilisation. The Kurus and the Panchalas were no longer like the warrior-cultivators who battled against the black aborigines and won the banks of the Indus and its tributaries. Manners had changed, society had become more refined and polished, learning and arts had made considerable progress. Kings invited wise men to their courts, held learned controversies with their priests, performed elaborate sacrifices according to the rules of the age, led respectable and trained armies to the field, appointed duly qualified men to collect taxes and to administer justice, and performed all the duties of civilised administrators. The relations and friends of the king and all the warriors of the nation learnt archery and driving the war chariot from their early youth, and also learned the Vedas and all the holy learning that was handed down from generation to generation. The priests multiplied religious rites and observances, preserved the traditional learning of the land and instructed and helped the people in their religious duties.

And the people lived in their towns and villages, cherished the sacred sacrificial fire in their houses, cultivated arts of peace, trained their boys from early youth in the Vedas and in their social and religious duties, and gradually developed those social customs which in India have the force of laws. Women had their legitimate influence in society, and moved without restriction or restraint. Society in India, fourteen hundred years before Christ, was more polished and refined than that of the preceding Vedic Age, and had more of healthy life and vigour than Hindu society has had in succeeding ages.

Civilisation, however, does not necessarily put a stop to wars and dissensions ; and of the political history of the Kurus and the Panchalas, the only reminiscences we possess are those of a sanguinary war in which many neighbouring tribes took part, and which forms the subject of one of the two great epics of India.

The incidents of the war described in the Mahabharata are undoubtedly mythical, as the incidents described in the Iliad are mythical. The five Pandava brothers and their common wife are myths, as Achilles and Paris and Helen are myths. But nevertheless the great epic is based on the recollections of a true war of the great Bharatas (hence the name of the epic), and faithfully describes the manners and customs of the Ancient Hindus, as the Iliad describes the manners of the ancient Greeks.

It is because the story of the existing epic throws valuable side-lights on the state of the society of the ancient Hindus that we think it necessary to briefly narrate it here. Let the reader attach no value to the names, which are mostly mythical, or to the incidents, which are mostly imaginary ; let him only endeavour to draw from the story a picture of Hindu life in the Epic Period, *i. e.*, the period of Aryan expansion in the Gangetic valley.

The capital of the Kurus at the time of which we are speaking was the city of Hastinapura, the supposed ruins of which have been discovered on the upper course of the Ganges, about sixty-five miles to the north-east of Delhi. Santanu, the old king of Hastinapura, died, leaving two sons, Bhishma, who had taken a vow of celibacy, and a younger prince who

became king. This young prince died in his turn, leaving two sons, Dhritarashtra who was blind, and Pandu who ascended the throne.

Pandu died, leaving five sons who are the heroes of the epic. Dhritarashtra remained virtually the king during the minority of the five Pandavas and of his own children, while Dhritarashtra's uncle Bhishma, a renowned warrior, remained the chief councillor and friend of the state.

The account of the training of the young Pandavas and the sons of Dhritarashtra to arms throws much light on the manners of royal houses. Drona was a Brahman, and a renowned warrior, for caste had not yet completely formed itself, Kshatriyas had not yet obtained the monopoly of the use of arms, nor Brahmans of religious learning. He had been insulted by his former friend the king of the Panchalas, and had retired in disgust to the court of the Kurus and undertook to train the princes in arms.

Yudhishthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, never became much of a warrior, but became versed in the religious learning of the age, and is the most righteous character in the epic. Bhima, the second, learnt to use the club, and was renowned for his gigantic size and gaint strength, and is indeed the Ajax of the poem. The third, Arjuna, excelled all other princes in the skill of arms, and aroused the jealousy and hatred of the sons of Dhritarashtra, even in their boyhood. Nakula, the fourth, learned to tame horses, and Sahadeva, the fifth, became proficient in astronomy. Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritarashtra, was proficient in the use of the club, and was a rival to Bhima.

At last the day came for a public exhibition of the proficiency which the princes had acquired in the use of arms. A spacious area was enclosed. Seats were arranged all round for the accommodation of ancient warriors and chieftains, of ladies and courtiers. The whole population of Kuruland flocked to see the skill of their young princes. The blind king Dhritarashtra was led to his seat; and foremost among the ladies were Gandhari, the queen of Dhritarashtra, and Kunti, the mother of the first three Pandavas. The last two were Pandu's sons by another wife.

There was shooting of arrows at a butt, and there was fighting with swords and bucklers and clubs. Duryodhana and Bhima soon began to fight in right earnest, and rushed towards each other like mad elephants. Shouts ascended to the sky, and soon the fight threatened to have a tragic end. At last the infuriated young men were parted, and peace was restored.

Then the young Arjuna entered the lists in golden mail, with his wondrous bow. His splendid archery surprised his most passionate admirers and thrilled the heart of his mother with joy, while shouts of admiration rose from the multitude like the roar of the ocean. He played with his sword, which flashed like lightning and also with his sharp-edged quoit or chakra, and never missed his mark. Lastly, he brought down horses and deer to the ground by the noose, and concluded by doing obeisance to his worthy preceptor Drona, amidst the ringing cheers of the assembled multitude.

The dark cloud of jealousy lowered on the brow of Dhritarashtra's sons, and soon they brought to the field an unknown warrior, Karna, who was a match for Arjuna in archery. King's sons could only fight with their peers, like the knights of old, and Dhritarashtra therefore knighted the unknown warrior, or rather made him a king on the spot, so that Arjuna might have no excuse for declining the fight. To awkward questions which were put to him, the haughty Karna replied that rivers and warriors knew not of their origin and birth,—their prowess was their genealogy. But the Pandavas declined the fight, and the haughty Karna retired in silence and in rage.

Drona now demanded the reward of his tuition. Like doughty warriors of old he held revenge to be the dearest joy of a warrior, and for his reward he asked the help of the Kurus to be revenged on Drupada, king of the Panchalas, who had insulted him. The demand could not be refused, Drona marched against Drupada, conquered him, and wrested half his kingdom. Drupada swore to be avenged.

Dark clouds now arose on the horizon of Kuruland. The time had come for Dhritarashtra to name a Yuvaraja, i. e., or a prince who would reign during his old age. The claim of

Yudhisthira to the throne of his father could not be gainsaid, and he was appointed Yuvaraja. But the proud Duryodhana rebelled against the arrangement, and the old monarch had to yield, and sent the five Pandavas in exile to Varanavata, said to be near modern Allahabad, and then the very frontier of Hindu settlements. The vengeance of Duryadhana pursued them there, and the house where the Pundavas lived was burnt to ashes. The Pandavas and their mother escaped by an underground passage, and for a long time roamed about disguised as Brahmans.

Heralds now went from country to country, and proclaimed in all lands that the daughter of Drupada, king of the Panchalas, was to choose for herself a husband among the most skilful warriors of the time. As usual on such occasions of *Stayamvara*, or choice of a husband by a princess, all the great kings and princes and warriors of the land flocked to the court of Drupada, each hoping to win the lovely bride, who had already attained her youth, and was renowned for her beauty. She was to give her hand to the most skilful archer, and the trial ordained was a pretty severe one. A heavy bow of great size was to be wielded, and an arrow was to be shot through a whirling chakra or quoit into the eye of a golden fish, set high on the top of a pole !

Not only princes and warriors, but multitudes of spectators flocked from all parts of the country to Kampilya, the capital of the Panchalas. The princes thronged the seats, and Brahmans filled the place with Vedic hymns. Then appeared Draupadi with the garland in her hand which she was to offer to the victor of the day. By her appeared her brother Dhrishtadyumna, who proclaimed the feat which was to be performed.

Kings rose and tried to wield the bow, one after another, but in vain. The skilful and proud Karna stepped forth to do the feat, but was prevented.

A Brahman suddenly rose and drew the bow, and shot the arrow through the whirling chakra into the eye of the golden fish. A shout of acclamation arose ! And Draupadi, the Kshatriya princess threw the garland round the neck of the brave Brahman, who led her away as bride. But murmurs of

discontent arose like the sound of troubled waters from the Kshatriya ranks at this victory of a Brahman, and the humiliation of the warriors ; and they gathered round the bride's father and threatened violence. The Pandavas now threw off their disguise, and the victor of the day proclaimed himself to be Arjuna, a true-born Kshatriya !

Then follows the strange myth that the Pandavas went back to their mother and said, a great prize had been won. Their mother not knowing what the prize was, told her sons to share it among them. And as a mother's madate cannot be disregarded, the five brothers wedded Draupadi as their wife. It is needless to say that the story of Draupadi, and of the five Pandavas is a myth. The Pandavas now formed an alliance with the powerful king of the Panchalas, and forced the blind king Dhritarashtra to divide the Kuru country between his sons and the Pandavas. The division, however, was unequal ; the fertile tract between the Ganges and the Jumna was retained by sons of Dhritarashtra, while the uncleared jungle in the west was given to the Pandavas. The jungle Khandava Prastha was soon cleared by fire, and a new capital called Indraprastha was built, the supposed ruins of which are shown to every modern visitor to Delhi.

Military expeditions were now undertaken by the Pandavas on all sides, but these need not detain us, especially as the accounts of these distant expeditions are modern interpolations. When we find in the Mahabharata accounts of expeditions to Ceylon, or to Bengal, we may unhesitatingly put them down as later interpolations.

And now Yudhishtira was to celebrate the Rajasuya, or coronation ceremony, and all the princes of the land, including his kinsmen of Hastinapura, were invited. The place of honour was given to Krishna, chief of the Yadavas of Gujrat. Sisupala of Chedi violently protested, and Krishna killed him on the spot. Krishna is only a great chief, and not a deity, in the older portions of the Mahabharata, and his story shows that Gujrat was colonised from the banks of the Jumna in the Epic Age.

The tumult having subsided, the consecrated water was

sprinkled on the newly-created monarch, and Brahmans went away loaded with presents.

But the newly-created king was not long to enjoy his kingdom. With all his righteousness, Yudhishtira had a weakness for gambling like the other chiefs of the time, and the unforgiving and jealous Duryodhana challenged him to a game. Kingdom, wealth, himself and his brothers, and even his wife were staked and lost,—and behold now, the five brothers and Draupadi the slaves of Duryodhana ! The proud Draupadi refused to submit to her position, but Duhsasana dragged her to the assembly-room by her hair, and Duryodhana forced her down on his knee in the sight of the stupefied assembly. The blood of the Pandavas was rising, when the old Dhritarashtra was led to the assembly-room and stopped a tumult. It was decided that the Pandavas had lost their kingdom, but should not be slaves. They agreed to go in exile for twenty years, after which they should remain concealed for a year. If the sons of Dhritarashtra failed to discover them during the year, they would get back their kingdom.

Thus the Pandavas again went in exile ; and after twelve years of wanderings in various places, disguised themselves in the thirteenth year and took service under the king of Virata, Yudhishtira was to teach the king gambling ; Bhima was the head cook ; Arjuna was to teach dancing and music to the king's daughter ; Nakula and Sahadeva were to be master of horse and master of cattle respectively, and Draupadi was to be the queen's handmaid. A difficulty arose. The queen's brother was enamoured of the new handmaid of superb beauty, and insulted her and was resolved to possess her. Bhima interfered and killed the lover in secret.

Cattle-lifting was not uncommon among the princes of those days, and the princes of Hastinapura carried away some cattle from Virata. Arjuna, the dancing master, could stand this no longer ; he put on his armour, drove out in chariot, and recovered the cattle, but was discovered ! The question whether the year of secret exile had quite expired was never settled.

And now the Pandavas sent an envoy to Hastinapura to claim back their kingdom. The claim was refused, and both

parties prepared for a war, the like of which had never been seen in India. All the princes of note joined one side or the other, and the battle which was fought in the plains of Kurukshetra, north of Delhi, lasted for eighteen days and ended in fearful slaughter and carnage.

The long story of the battle with its endless episodes need not detain us. Arjuna killed the ancient Bhishma unfairly, after that chief was forced to desist from fighting. Drona, with his impenetrable "squares" or phalanxes, killed his old rival Drupada, but Drupada's son revenged his father's death and killed Drona unfairly. Bhima met Duhsasana, who had insulted Draupadi in the gambling room, cut off his head, and in fierce vindictiveness drank his blood ! Lastly, there was the crowning contest between Karna and Arjuna, who had hated each other through life ; and Arjuna killed Karna unfairly when his chariot wheels had sunk in the earth and he could not move or fight. On the last or eighteenth day, Duryodhana fled from Bhima, but was compelled by taunts and rebukes to turn round and fight, and Bhima by a foul blow (because struck below the waist) smashed the knee on which Duryodhana had once dragged Draupadi. And the wounded warrior was left there to die. The bloodshed was not yet over, for Drona's son made a midnight raid into the enemy's camp and killed Drupada's son, and thus an ancient feud was quenched in blood.

The remainder of the story is soon told. The Pandavas went to Hastinapura, and Yudhishtira became king. He is said to have subdued every king in Aryan India, and at last celebrated the Asvamedha ceremony or the great horse sacrifice. A horse was let loose and wandered at its will for a year, and no king dared to stop it. This was a sign of the submission of all the surrounding kings, and they were then invited to the great horse-sacrifice. We have seen that in the Vedic times the horse was sacrificed simply for eating ; in the Epic Period the horse-sacrifice became a means of expiation of sin, and of the assumption of supremacy among kings.

Such is the story of the great epic divested of its numerous legends and episodes, its supernatural incidents and digressions. Krishna the Island-born, and compiler of the Vedas, (not

Krishna the Yadava chief), is said to have been the son of the unmarried girl who afterwards married Santanu. He was therefore the half-brothers of Bhishma. He often appears on the scene abruptly and in a supernatural manner, and imparts instruction and advice. The story has a historical interest, and shows that the Vedas were compiled before the time of Kuru-Panchala war.

For the rest, it will appear from the above brief account that the first Hindu colonists of the Gangetic valley had not yet lost the sturdy valour and the stubborn warlike determination of the preceding Vedic Age. Kings now ruled over larger countries and peoples, manners were more polished, the rules of social life and of chivalry were more highly developed, and the science of war itself was better organised. But nevertheless the stern and relentless valour of the Vedic warriors breaks through the polished manners of the Kurus and the Panchalas, and those nations, if they had gained in civilisation, had scarcely yet lost much in the vigour of national life. How imperfectly the caste-system, flourished among these sturdy races is shown by many facts which still loom out in bold outline amidst the interpolations and additions of later writers. Santanu, the ancient king of Hastinapura, had a brother Devapi, who was a priest. The most learned character in the epic, Yudhisnthra, is a Kshatriya, and the most skilful warrior Drona is a Brahman. And the venerable compiler of the Vedas, Krishna Dvaipayana himself—was he a Brahman or a Kshatriya?

CHAPTER III

VIDEHAS, KOSALAS AND KĀSIS

The tide of Aryan conquests rolled onward. When the country between the Jumna and the Ganges has been completely conquered, peopled, and Hinduised, new bands of adventurous settlers crossed the Ganges and marched further eastwards to found new colonies and new Hindu kingdoms. Stream after stream was crossed, forest after forest was explored and, cleared, region after region was slowly conquered, peopled, and Hinduised in their onward march towards the unknown east. The history of the long struggles and the gradual developament of the Hindu power in these regions has been lost to us ; and we only see, in the literature which has been preserved, the establishment of powerful and civilised Hindu kingdoms east of the Ganges,—the kingdom of the Kosalas in the country known as modern Oudh, that of the Videhas in North Behar, and that of the Kasis round modern Benares.

Some recollection of the eastern march of the Videhas has been preserved in a stray passage in the Satapatha Brahmana, quoted below :—

“10. Madhava the Videgha carried Agni Vaisvanara in his mouth. The Rishi Gotama Rahugana was his family priest. When addressed by the latter he made no answer, fearing lest Agni might fall from his mouth.

“13. Still he did not answer. (The priest continued) : Thee, O butter-sprinkled one, we invoke ! (Rig Veda, V, 26, 2). So much he uttered when, at the very mentioning of butter, Agni Vaisvanara flashed forth from the king's mouth ; he was unable to hold him back ; issued from his mouth and fell down on this earth.

“14. Madhava the Videgha was at that time on the river Sarasvati. He (Agni) thence went burning along this earth towards the east ; and Gotama Rahugana and the Videgha Madhava followed after him as he was burning along. He burnt over (dried up) all these rivers. Now that river which is

called Sadanira (Gunduck river) flows from the northern (Himalaya) mountain ; that one he did not burn over. That one the Brahmans did not cross in former times, thinking it has not been burnt over by Agni Vaisvanara,

"15. Nowadays, however, there are many Brahmans to the east of it. At that time it (the land east of the Sadanira) was very uncultivated, very marshy, because it had not been tasted by Agni Vaisvanara.

"16. Nowadays, however, it is very cultivated, for the Brahmans have caused Agni to taste it through sacrifices. Even in late summer that river, as it were, rages along ; so cold it is, not having been burnt over by Agni Vaisvanara.

"17. Madhava the Videgha then said to Agni, 'Where am I to abide ?' 'To the east of this river be thy abode !' said he. Even now this river forms the boundary of the Kosalas and Videhas ; for these are the Madhavas (or descendants of Madhava)" (*Satapatha Brahmana*. I, 4, 1).

Here then we have an account, in a legendary form, of the gradual march of the colonists from the banks of the Sarasvati eastwards until they came to the Gunduck. That river formed the boundary between the two kingdoms ; the Kosalas lived to the west of it, and the Videhas to the east of it.

In course of years, probably of centuries, the kingdom of the Videhas rose in power and in civilisation, until it became the most prominent kingdom in Northern India.

Janaka, king of the Videhas, is probably the most prominent figure in the history of the Epic Period in India. That monarch had not only established his power in the farthest confines of the Hindu dominions in India, but he gathered round him the most learned men of his time, he entered into discussion with them, and instructed them in holy truths about the Universal Being. It is this that has surrounded the name of Janaka with undying glory. King Ajatasatru of the Kasis, himself a learned man and a most renowned patron of learning, exclaimed in despair, "Verily, all people run away, saying, Janaka is our patron !" (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, II, 1, 1.)

The great fame of Janaka is partly owing to the culture and learning of the chief priest of his court, Yajnavalkya Vajasaneyin. Under the royal auspices of Janaka this priest

conceived the bold idea of revising the Yajur Veda as it then existed, of separating the formulas from the exegetic matter, of condensing the former in the shape of a new Yajur Veda (the White Yajur Veda), and of amplifying the latter into a body of Brahmana (the Satapatha Brahmana). Generations of priests laboured at this stupendous work, but the glory of starting the work belongs to the founder of the school, Yajnavalkya Vajasaneyin, and his learned patron, King Janaka of the Videhas.

But Janaka has a still higher claim to our respect and admiration. While the priestly caste was still multiplying rituals and supplying dogmatic explanations for each rite, the royal caste seems to have felt some impatience at the priestly pedantry. Thinking and earnest Kshatriyas asked themselves if these rites and dogmas were all that religion could teach. Learned Kshatriyas, while still conforming to the rites laid down by priests, gave a start to healthier speculations and inquired about the destination of the Soul and the nature of the Supreme Being. So bold, so healthy and vigorous were these new and earnest speculations, that the priestly classes, who were wise in their own esteem, at last felt their inferiority, and came to Kshatriyas to learn something of the wisdom of the new school. The Upanishads contain the healthy and earnest speculations which were started at the close of the Epic Period ; and King Janaka of Videha is honoured and respected,—more than any other king of the time,—as an originator of the earnest speculations of the Upanishads.

The teaching of the Upanishads will be dwelt on more fully in a subsequent chapter of this Book, but an account of Janaka and of the other kings of the period and their place in Hindu literature will not be complete unless we cite a few passages here, illustrating their relations with their priests, and their labours in the cause of earnest philosophical thought in India.

Janaka of Videha once met some Brahmans who had just arrived. They were Svetaketu Aruneya, Somasushama Satyajajni and Yajnavalkya. He said to them : ‘How do you perform the Agnihotra ?’

The three Brahmans replied as best they could ; but not

correctly. Yajnavalkya came very near the mark, but was not quite correct. Janaka told them so, and mounted his car and went away !

The priests said : "This fellow of a Rajanya has insulted us." Yajnavalkya mounted his car, followed the king, and had the difficulty explained (*Satapatha Brahmana*, XI, 4, 5). "Henceforth Janaka became a Brahman" (*S. Br.* XI, 6, 2, 1).

We find in Chhandogya Upanishad, V. 3. that one of the three Brahmans named above, Svetaketu Aruneya, came to an assembly of the Panchalas, and Pravahana Jaivali, a Kshatriya, asked him some questions which puzzled him. He came back sorrowful to his father and said : "That fellow of a Rajanya asked me five questions, and I could not answer one of them." The father, Gautama, was himself puzzled and went to the Kshatriya to have his difficulty removed. Pravahana Jaivali replied, "Gautama, this knowledge did not go to any Brahman before you, and therefore this teaching belonged in all the worlds to the Kshatra class alone." And then he imparted the knowledge to Gautama.

In another place in this Upanishad (I, 8). this Pravahana silenced two boastful Brahmans, and then imparted the true knowledge of the Highest God to them.

A story is told in the Satapatha Brahmana (X, 6. 1. 1), and is repeated in the Chhandogya Upanishad (V, 11). that five Brahman householders, and theologians became anxious to know, "What is our Self and what is God ?" They came to Uddalaka Aruni to obtain the knowledge, but Aruni had his misgivings, and therefore took them to the Kshatriya king Asvapati Kaikeya, who courteously invited them to stay at a sacrifice he was going to perform. He said ; "In my kingdom there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man without an altar in his house, no ignorant person, no adulterer, much less an adulteress. I am going to perform a sacrifice, sirs, and as much wealth as I give to each Ritvik priest, I shall give to you, sirs. Please to stay here."

They stayed and told him what they had come for, and "on the next morning they approached him, carrying fuel in their hands (like students), and he, without any preparatory rites," imparted to them the knowledge they had come for.

It is curious how we meet the same names over and over again in the different Upanishads, and often the same story too in different forms, showing that the old Upanishads were composed at much the same time. We find Uddalaka Aruni, also called Gautama, and his son Svetaketu again in the Kaushitaki Upanishad; and the father and the son went to Chitra, Gangyayani, fuel in hand, to learn the truth. Chitra, a Kshatriya king, said: "You are worthy of Brahman, O Gautama, because you were not led away by pride. Come hither, I shall make you know clearly" (I, 1).

A celebrated story is told in the Kaushitaki Upanishad (IV), of a conversation between Gargya Balaki, a celebrated man of learning, and Ajatasatru, the learned king of the Kasis. The boastful Brahman challenged the king, but in course of the learned dispute which followed, he collapsed and became silent. Ajatasatru said to him: 'Thus far do you know, O Balaki?' 'Thus far only,' replied Balaki. Then Ajatasatru said to him: 'Vainly did you challenge me, saying, Shall I tell you of God?' 'O Balaki, He who is the maker of those objects (which you mentioned), He of whom all this is the work, He alone is to be known.'

"Then Balaki came, carrying fuel in his hand, saying: 'May I come to you as a pupil?' Ajatasatru said to him: 'I deem it improper that a Kshatriya should initiate a Brahman. Come, I will make you know clearly.'

This story, as well as the story of Svetaketu Aruneya and the Kshatriya king Pravahana Jaivali, are repeated in the Brihadarnyaka Upanishad.

There are numerous such passages in the Upanishads in which the Kshatriyas are represented as the wisest teachers in true religious knowledge. But it is needless to multiply instances here. What we have said is enough to indicate the place which belongs to the royal caste at the close of the Epic Period in the history of Hindu religion and philosophy. The Upanishads mark a new era in the history of human knowledge, and this knowledge, which dates about 1000 B.C., "did not belong to any Brahman before," "it belonged in all the words to the Kshatra class alone."

These are real claims of Janaka, king of the Videhas, to the

admiration and gratitude of posterity. Curiously enough, posereity remembers him and the Videhas and the Kosalas also through a myth which has clung round their revered mames. That myth relates to the Aryan conquest of Southern India ; and with a fervid and blind gratitude poets of subsequent ages have connected that great historical event with the names of ancient kings who had nothing to do with the conquest ! Historical knowledge in Europe, even in the dark ages, was never so dim as to allow a poet to attribute the recovery of Jerusalem to Charlemagne or Alfred the Great ! But the second great epic of India conceives and describes the conquest of Ceylon by a king of the Kosalas who had married the daughter of Janaka, king of the Videhas.

It is not possible with our present knowledge to state when the Ramayana was composed in its original shape. We find references to the Mahabharata in the Sutra literature, but we find no such reference to the Ramayana. The discovery and conquest of Ceylon by Vijaya from Bengal took place in the fifth century B. C., and at first sight one would be inclined to refer the first conception of the epic, which has its scene of action in that island, to that date. On the other hand, the existence of the island was well known to the Hindus for centuries before its conquest by Vijaya. And the composition of the Ramayana, which makes no allusion to Vijaya's conquest, may be referred to an age anterior to Vijaya, when the island was still very imperfectly known to the Hindus.

That this view is more probable appears from the fact that the whole of India south of the Vindhya chain is described in the Ramayana as one interminable forest, inhabited by aborigines who are described as monkeys and bears. Now we know that the banks of the Godavari and even of the Krishna river were colonised by the Aryans early in the Rationalistic Period, and great empires like that of the Andhras rose to power and started new schools of science and learning several centuries before Christ. The first conception of the Ramayana must be referred to a period anterior to these movements in the South, for the Ramayana speaks of no Aryan civilisation south of the Vindhyas. The original Ramayana, like the original Mahabharata, belongs therefore to the Epic Age.

Like the Mahabharata, the Ramayana is utterly valueless as a narrative of historical events and incidents. As in the Mahabharata, so in the Ramayana, the heroes are myths, pure and simple.

Sita, the field furrow, had received divine honours from the time of the Rig Veda, and had been worshipped as a goddess. When cultivation gradually spread in Southern India, it was not difficult to invent a political myth that Sita was carried to the South. And when this goddess and woman—the noblest creation of human imagination,—had acquired a distinct and lovely individuality, she was naturally described as the daughter of the holiest and most learned king on record, Janaka of the Videhas !

But who is Rama, described in the epic as Sita's husband and the king of the Kosalas ? The later Puranas tell us that he was an incarnation of Vishnu, but Vishnu himself had not risen to prominence at the time of which we are speaking ! Indra was still the chief of gods of the Epic Period. And in the Sutra literature (e. g., Paraskara Grihya Sutra, II, 17, 9) we learn that Sita, the furrow goddess, is the wife of Indra. Is it then an untenable conjecture that Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, is in his original conception, like Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata, only a new edition of Indra battling with the demons of drought ? The myth of Indra has thus been mixed up with the epic which describes a historic war in Northern India, and with the epic which describes the historic conquest of Southern India !

But though the Ramayana is utterly valueless as a narrative of events, still, like the Mahabharata, it throws side-lights on the state of ancient society in India, and the story of the epic therefore needs be briefly told. Only we must permise that, even as a picture of life, the Ramayana is long posterior to the Mahabharata. and belongs to the very close of the Epic Period. We miss in the Ramayana the fiery valour and the proud self-assertion of the Kshatriyas of the Mahabharata ; and the subordination of the people to the priestly caste is more complete. Janaka himself is not described as the proud asserter of Kshatriya learning and dignity that he was, but as a humble servant of priests. And Rama himself, the hero of

the epic, though he encounters and defeats a Brahman warrior Parasurama, does so with many apologies and due submission ! The story of Parasurama probably conceals a great historic truth. He is said to have fought against the Kshatriyas and exterminated the caste ; and then he was conquered by the Kshatriya Rama, the hero of the epic. It would seem that this story indicates the real rivalry and hostilities between the priestly and warrior castes,—indications of which we have found in a literary form in the Upanishads.

For the rest, one feels on reading the Ramayana that the heroic age of India had passed, and that centuries of residence in the Gangetic valley had produced an enervating effect on the Aryans. We miss the heroic if somewhat rude and sturdy manners and incidents which mark the Mahabharata. We miss characters distinguished by real valour, and battles fought with real obstinacy and determination. We miss men of flesh and blood, and pride and determination, like Karna and Duryodhana and Bhima ; and the best developed characters in the Ramayana are woman like the proud and scheming Kaikeyi or the gentle and ever-suffering Sita. The heroes of the Ramayana are somewhat tame and commonplace personages, very respectful to priests, very anxious to conform to the rules of decorum and duty, doing a vast amount of fighting work mechanically, but without the determination, the persistence of real fighters ! A change had come over the spirit of the nation ; and if princes and men had become more polished and law-abiding, they had become less sturdy and heroic. For a picture of Hindu life of the thirteenth century, when the hardy and conquering Kurus and the Panchalas ruled in the Doab, we would refer our readers to the Mahabharata. For a picture of Hindu life of the eleventh century, when the Kosalas and the Videhas had, by a long residence in the Gangetic valley, become law-abiding and priest-ridden, learned and enervated, we would refer our readers to the Ramayana. The two epics represent the change which Hindu life and society underwent from the commencement to the close of the Epic Age.

We proceed now with the story of the Ramayana. The people who lived in the wide tract of country between the Ganges and the Ganduck were known by the general name of

the Kosalas, as we have seen before. Dasaratha, a distinguished king of this nation, had his capital in Ayodhya, or Oude, the ruins of which ancient town are still shown to travellers in some shapeless mounds. Dasaratha had three queens honoured above the rest, of whom Kausalya bore him his eldest born Rama, Kaikevi was the mother of Bharata, and Sumitra of Lakshmana and Satrughna. Dasaratha in his old age decided on making Rama the Yuvaraja or reigning prince, but the proud and beauteous Kaikeyi insisted that her son should be Yuvaraja, and the feeble old king yielded to the determined will of his wife.

Before this Rama had won Sita, the daughter of Janaka king of the Vedehas, at a *Svayamvara*. Kings and princes had assembled there, but Rama alone could lift the heavy bow, and bent it till it broke in twain. But now, when Ayodhya was still ringing with acclamation at that prospect of Rama's being installed as Yuvaraja, it was decided in queen Kaikeyi's chambers that Bharata must be the Yuvaraja, and further that Rama must go into exile for fourteen years.

Rama was too obedient and dutiful to resist or even resent this decision. His faithful half-brother Lakshmana accompanied him, and the gentle Sita would not hear of parting with her lord. Amidst the tears and lamentation of the people of Ayodhya, Rama and Sita and Lakshmana walked out of the city.

The exiles first went to the hermitage of Bharadvaja in Prayaga or Allahabad, and then to that of Valmiki in Chitrakuta, somewhere in modern Bandelkund. Valmiki is reputed to be the author of the epic Ramayana, just as Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas, is said to be the author of the Mahabharata.

Dasaratha died of grief for Rama, and Bharata followed Rama to Chitrakuta, and informed him of their father's death, and implored his return. But Rama felt himself bound by the promise he had made, and it was agreed that Rama would return after fourteen years and ascend the throne. Bharata returned to Ayodhya.

Leaving Chitrakuta, Rama wandered in the Dandaka forest and towards the sources of the Godavari among jungles and

non-Aryan tribes. For Southern India had not yet been colonised by the Aryans. Thirteen years thus passed away.

Ravana, the monster king of Lanka or Ceylon, and of Southern India, heard of the beauty of Sita now dwelling in jungles ; and in the absence of Rama took her away from their hut, and carried her off to Ceylon.¹ Rama, after a long search, obtained clue of her ; he made alliances with the non-Aryan tribes of Southern India, who are described as monkeys and bears, and made preparations for crossing over to Ceylon (?) to his wife.

Bali was a great king among the non-Aryans, but his brother Sugriva thirsted after his kingdom and his wife. Rama fought and killed Bali, helped Sugriva to win the kingdom and widow, and Sugriva then marched with his army to Lanka.

Hanuman, the commander-in-chief of the non-Aryan army, led way. He leaped over the strait of sixty miles which separates India from Ceylon, found Sita, and gave her ring sent by Rama. He then caused a conflagration in the capital of Ravana, and returned to Rama.

A causeway was then built across the strait by boulders and stones. The reader is aware that a natural causeway runs nearly across the strait, and there is no doubt that the physical aspect of this locality suggested to the poet the idea that the causeway was built by the superhuman labours of Rama's army. The whole army then crossed over and laid siege to the capital of Ravana.

The account of the war which follows, though full of poetical incidents and stirring description, is unnatural and tedious. Chief after chief was sent out by Ravana to beat back the invaders, but they all fell in the war, Rama using his supernatural weapons and mystic mantras. Indrajit, the proud son of Ravana, battled from the clouds, but Lakshmana killed him. Ravana came out in rage and killed Lakshmana, but the dead hero revived under the influence of some medicine brought by the faithful Hanuman. One of Ravana's brothers, Bibhisana, had left his brother and had Joined Rama, and told him the

¹To Lanka. Cylon is not Lanka, according to the latest researches.
—Ed.

secret by which each warrior would be killed, and thus chief after chief of Ravana's proud host fell. At last Ravana himself came out, and was killed by Rama. Sita was recovered, but she had to prove her untainted virtue by throwing herself into a lighted pyre, and then coming out of it uninjured.

The fourteenth year of exile having now expired, Rama and Sita returned to Ayodhya and ascended the throne. But the suspicions of the people fell on Sita, who had been in Ravana's house, and could not, they thought, have returned untainted. And Rama, as weak as his father had been, sent poor, suffering Sita—then gone with child—to exile.

Valmiki received her at Chitrakuta, and there her two sons, Lava and Kusa, were born. Valmiki composed the poem of the Ramayana and taught the boys to repeat the piece, and thus years were passed.

Then Rama decided to celebrate the Asvamedha sacrifice, and sent out horse. The animal came as far as Valmiki's hermitage, and the boys, in a playful humour, caught it and detained it. Rama's troops tried in vain to recover the animal. At last Rama himself saw the princely boys, but did not know who they were; he heard the poem Ramayana chanted by them, and it was in a passion of grief and regret that he at last knew them and embraced them as his own dear boys.

But there was no joy in store for Sita. The people's suspicions could not be allayed, and Rama was too weak to act against the people. The earth which had given poor Sita birth yawned and received its long-suffering child. The Vedic conception of Sita, as the field-furrow, manifestes in the Epic in this incident. But to the millions of Hindus, Sita is a real human character,—a pattern of female virtue and female self-abnegation. To this day Hindus hesitate to call their female children by the name of Sita; for if her gentleness, her virtue, her uncomplaining devotion, and her unconquerable love for her lord, were more than human, her sufferings and woes too were more than usually fall to the lot of woman. There is not a Hindu woman in the length and breadth of India to whom the story of suffering Sita is not known, and to whom her character is not a model to strive after and to imitate. And

Rama too, though scarcely equal to Sita in the worth of character, has been a model to men for his truth, his obedience, and his piety. And thus the epic has been for the millions of India a means of moral education, the value of which can hardly be over-estimated.

CHAPTER IV

ARYANS AND NON-ARYANS

THE great river systems of Northern India determined the course of Aryan conquests ; when we survey the course of these rivers, we comprehend the history of Aryan conquests during ten centuries. And when we have traced the course of the Indus and its tributaries, and of the Ganges and the Jumna as far as Benares and North Behar, we have seen the whole extent of Indo-Aryan world as it existed at the close of the Epic period, or about 1000 B. C. Beyond this wide tract of Hindu kingdoms lay the whole extent of India yet unexplored or rather unconquered by the Aryans, and peopled by various aboriginal tribes. A wide belt of this Non-Aryan tract, surrounding the Hindu world to the east, south, and west, was becoming known to the Hindus about the very close of the Epic Period. South Behar, Malwa, and a portion of the Deccan and the regions to the south of the Rajputana desert, formed a wide semi-circular belt of country, as yet not Hinduised, but becoming gradually known to the Hindus, and therefore finding occasional mention in the latest works of the Brahmana literature, as regions peopled by *Satvas* i. e., living creatures, hardly human beings. We can imagine hardy colonists penetrating into this encircling belt of unknown and uncivilised regions, obtaining a mastery over the aborigines wherever they went, establishing some isolated settlements on the banks of fertile rivers, and presenting to the astonished barbarians some of the results of civilised administration and civilised life. We can imagine also saintly anchorites retiring into these wild jungles, and fringing the tops of fertile valleys with their holy hermitages, which were the seats of learning and of sanctity. And lastly, adventurous royal huntsmen not unoften penetrated into these jungles, and unhappy princes, exiled by their more powerful rivals, often chose to retire from the world and took up their abodes in these solitudes. In such manner was the belt of Non-Aryan country gradually known to the Hindus, and we will cite a passage or two which

will show how far this knowledge extended, and how the civilised Hindus named the different aboriginal tribes dwelling in this tract, probably in the eleventh century B. C.

There is a passage in the last book of the Aitareya Brahmana which, along with an account of the principal Hindu kingdoms of the time, makes some mention of aboriginal races in the south and south-west; and the passage deserves to be quoted :—

“The Vasavas then inaugurated him (Indra) in the eastern direction during thirty-one days by these three Rik verses, the Yajus verse, and the great words (all just mentioned), for the sake of obtaining universal sovereignty. Hence all kings of eastern nations are inaugurated to universal sovereignty and called *Samraj*, i.e., universal sovereign, after this precedent made by the gods.

“Then the Rudras inaugurated Indra in the southern region during thirty-one days, with the three Rik verses, the Yajus, and the great words (just mentioned), for obtaining enjoyment of pleasures. Hence all kings of living creatures¹ in the southern region, are inaugurated for the enjoyment of pleasures and called *Bhoja*, i.e., the enjoyer.

“Then the divine Adityas inaugurated him in the western region during thirty-one days, with those three Rik verses, that Yajus verse, and those great words for obtaining independent rule. Hence all kings of the *Nichyas* and *Apachyas* in the western countries² are inaugurated to independent rule, and called “independent rulers.”³

“Then the Visvedevah inaugurated him during thirty-one days in the northern region by those three Rik verses, &c., for distinguished rule. Hence all people living in northern countries beyond the Himalaya, such as the *Uttara Kurus*, *Uttara Madras*, are inaugurated for living without a king (*Vairajyam*) and called *Viraj*, i. e. without king.

“Then the divine Sadhyas and Aptayas inaugurated Indra during thirty-one days in the middle region, which is a firmly

¹ *Satvanam* is the word in the original.

² *Pratichyam* is the word in the original.

³ *Svarat* is the word in the original, whence *Saurashtra* and *Surat*.

established footing (the immovable centre) to the kingship (*Rajya*). Hence the kings of the *Kuru Panchals*, with the *Vasas* and *Usinaras*, are inaugurated to kingship and called kings (*Raja*)."

This passage shows us at one glance the whole of the Hindu world as it existed at the close of the Epic period. To the farthest east lived the Videhas and the Kasis and the Kosalas, as we have seen before, and those newest and youngest of the Hindu colonists excelled in learning and reputation their elder brethren in the west. Their kings, Janaka and Ajatasatru and others, took the proud title of *Samraj*, and worthily maintained their dignity by their learning and their prowess.

In the south, some bands of Aryan settlers must have worked their way up the valley of the Chumbal, and became acquainted with the aboriginal tribes inhabiting the country now known as Malwa. These tribes were called *Satvas*, i. e., living creatures, scarcely human beings! We note, however, that the kingdoms in this direction already went by the name of *Bhoju* (however fanciful the derivation which the author gives to the word), and *Bhoja* was in later times the name of the same region, lying immediately to the north of the Vindhya chain, and along the valley of the Chumbal.

Westwards from the place surged the waves of Aryan settlers or adventurers, until the invaders came to the shores of the Arabian sea, and could proceed no further. The aboriginal races in these distant tracts were looked upon with some degree of contempt by the civilised colonists or invaders, and were significantly called *Nichyas* and *Apachyas*, and their rulers had the significant name of *Svarat* or independent rulers. These, races dimly known at the very close of the Epic Period, were the ancestors of the proudest and most warlike Hindu tribe of later times, viz., the Maharattas.

To the north the Uttara Kurus and the Uttara Madras and other tribes lived—beyond the Himalaya we are told—but which probably means beyond the lower ranges and among the valleys of the Himalayas. To the present day men in these hills live in independent primitive communities, and have very little concern with chief or king; and it is no wonder that in ancient times they should be known as peoples without kings.

And then, in the very centre of the Hindu world, along the valley of the Ganges, lived the powerful tribes of the Kurus and the Panchalas, and the less known tribes, the Vasas and the Usinaras.

In the west, the deserts of Rajputana were wholly unexplored by the Aryans. The Bhil aborigines of those deserts and mountains were left undisturbed until new and hardy tribes of invaders entered India after the Christian era and settled down in these parts.

In the far east, South Behar was not yet Hinduised. In a passage in the Atharva Veda pointed out by Weber, special and hostile notice is taken of the Angas and the Magadhas. The passage shows that the people of South Behar did not yet belong to the Hindu confederation of nations ; but were nevertheless becoming known to the Aryans. Bengal proper was as yet unknown.

And the whole of Souththern India *i. e.*, India south of the Vindhya range, was yet unoccupied by the Hindus. The Aitareya Brahmana (VII, 18), gives the names of certain degraded barbarous tribes, and among others that of the Andhras. We shall see that in the Rationalistic Period the Andhras rose to be a great civilised Hindu power in the Deccan.

We have now spoken of all the principal Aryan races and kingdoms which flourished in the Epic Period, and of the non-Aryan kingdoms, which formed a semicircular belt in the south the Hindu world. It will be our pleasant task in the following chapters to give some account of the social customs and the domestic life of the people. But before we take leave of kings, we must make some mention of the great coronation ceremony, as it has been described in many works of the Epic Period. This ceremony and the horse-sacrifice were the most imposing and ostentatious royal ceremonials of Ancient India, and we have already said something about both these rites, in connection with the two Epics of the Hindus. An extract or two about the coronation ceremony are all that is needed here ;—

“He spreads the tiger-skin on the throne in such a manner that the hairs come outside, and that part which covered the the neck is turned eastward. For the tiger is the Kshattria

(royal power) of the beasts in the forests. The Kshattria is the royal prince ; by means of this Kshattria, the king makes his Kshattria (royal power) prosper. The king, when taking his seat on the thorne, approaches it from behind, turning his face eastwards, kneels down with crossed legs, so that his right knee touches the earth, and holding the throne with his hands, prays over it an appropriate mantra.

"The priest then pours the holy water over the king's head, and repeats the following : 'With these waters, which are happy, which cure everything, increase the royal power, the immortal Prajapati sprinkled Indra, Soma sprinkled the royal Varuna, and Yama sprinkled Manu ; with the same I sprinkle thee ! Be the ruler over kings in this world. The illustrious mother bore thee as the great universal ruler over men ; the blessed mother has borne thee, &c.' And the ceremony concludes with a drink of the Soma wine which the priest hands over to the king" (*Aitareya Brahmana*, VIII, 6—9).

We are then told that with this ceremony priests invested a number of kings whose names are already known to us. Tura, the son of Kavasha, thus inaugurated Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit. "Thence Janamejaya went everywhere, conquering the earth up to its ends, and sacrificed the sacrificial horse." Parvata and Narada thus invested Yudhamsraushti, the son of Ugrasena. Vasishtha invested Sudas, the great conqueror of the Rig Veda hymns ; and Dirghatamas invested Bharata, the son of Duhshanta, with this ceremony.

We have another excellent account of the coronation rite in the White Yajur Veda, from which we quote a remarkable passage in which the priest blesses the newly crowned king : "May God who rules the world bestow on you the power to rule your subjects. May fire, worshipped by householders, bestow on you supremacy over the householders. May Soma, the lord of trees, bestow on you supremacy over forests. May Vrihaspati, the god of speech, bestow on you supremacy in speech. May Indra, the highest among gods bestow on you the highest supremacy. May Rudra, the cherisher of animals, bestow on you supremacy over animals. May Mitra, who is truth, make you supreme in truth. May Varuna, who cherishes holy works, make you supreme in holy acts" (IX, 39).

In the address to the people which follows, the priest tells them : "This is your king, O ye such and such tribes." The Kanva text reads thus : "This is your king, O ye Kurus, O ye Panchalas."

We will conclude this chapter with an excellent piece of advice which is given to kings further on, in the same Veda, which modern rulers will do well to remember :—"*If thou shalt be a ruler, then from this day judge the strong and the weak with equal justice, resolve on doing good incessantly to the public, and protect the country from all calamities*" (X, 27).

CHAPTER V

CASTE

The entire isolation in which the Hindu Aryans lived from the outer world for centuries and thousands of years,—an isolation which has no parallel in the history of any other nation,—had its advantages and its disadvantages. Among other results it led to social institutions being more and more crystallised into hard and fast rules which gradually contracted the liberties and the free energies of the people. Four or five centuries of peaceful residence in a genial climate in the fertile basis of the Ganges and the Jumna enabled the Hindus to found civilised kingdoms, to cultivate philosophy, science, and arts, and to develop their religious and social institutions; but it was under the same gentle but enervating influences that they also divided themselves into those separate social classes known as “castes.”

We have seen that about the close of the Vedic Period the priests had already formed themselves into a separate profession, and sons stepped forward to take up the duties of their fathers. When religious rites became more elaborate in the Epic Period, when with the founding of new kingdoms along the fertile Doab kings prided themselves on the performance of vast sacrifices with endless rites and observances, it is easy to understand that the priests who alone could undertake such complicated rites rose in the estimation of the people, until they were naturally regarded as aloof from the ordinary people, as a distinct and superior race,—as a caste. They devoted their lifetime to learn those rites, and they alone were able to perform them in all their details, and natural inference in the popular mind was that they alone were worthy of the holy task. And when hereditary priests were thus completely separated from the people by their fancied sanctity and their real knowledge of elaborate rites, it was scarcely considered “good form” on their part to form misalliances with the people outside their holy rank. They might still condescend to honour particular families by choosing brides from among them, but

young ladies of priestly houses must never give their hands to men outside their ranks. What is a feeling and custom among modern nations soon became an inviolable and religious rule among a custom-abiding people like the Gangetic Hindus, isolated from the outside world.

The very same causes led to the rise of a royal caste. Royalty had not assumed a very high dignity among the Punjab Hindus. Warlike chiefs led clans from conquests to conquests ; and the greatest of them, like Sudas the patron of the Vasishthas and the Visvamisras, were looked upon more as leaders of men and protectors of clans than as mighty kings. Far different was the state of things with the Gangetic Hindus. Probably in the early days of the martial Kurus and Panchalas, caste distinctions had not yet been fully matured. But later in the day, the kings of the peaceful Kosalas and Videhas, surrounded by all the pomp and circumstance of royalty, were looked upon by the humble and lowly and extremely law-abiding people as more than human. It was scarcely possible, under these circumstances, that maidens of the royal or warlike classes should condescend to marry men from the ranks. The stigma which attaches to such misalliances all over the world gave rise to an inviolable rule in India. And when priests and warriors were thus separated by absolute and inviolable rules from the people, the humblest girls of the former classes were debarred from marriage with the greatest and richest among the Vaisyas.

It is difficult to find in the history of European institutions any parallel to the caste-system of India. Yet there was a time in Europe when institutions somewhat similar to the caste-system of India sprang from the same causes which operated in India, viz., the feebleness of the people, and the power of warriors and priests. When the Roman Empire fell to pieces, and barbarian chiefs and barons carved out among themselves the fairest portions of Europe, the mass of the people were devoid of political life and political freedom. Never in Europe was there such a wide distinction between a powerful clergy and a powerful soldiery on the one hand, and a lifeless and powerless people on the other, as in the days of feudalism in Europe. Vast monasteries arose all over Europe ; great

feudal towers frowned on every navigable river and every humble village ; and the dwellers of villages and the humble artisans in little towns were scarcely regarded as better than slaves. The clergy, the knighthood, and the people of Europe in the Middle Ages answered in some respects to the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, and the Vaisyas of India.

But the resemblance is in appearance only. The clergy of feudal Europe did not marry, and their ranks were recruited from the ablest, the cleverest, the most learned among the people. The knights too were glad to welcome into their ranks doughty squires and brave warriors among the people. The people, too, soon formed leagues to protect their commerce, fortified their towns to meet the marauding barons, formed municipal corporations, and trained themselves to arms to defend their interests in those insecure times. Ambitious scions of baronial houses often mixed with the people, and fought their battles in the field and at the council board ; and this healthy admixture, which the caste-system prevented in India, revived and strengthened the people in Europe. Feudalism and the absolute power of the clergy decayed as trade and commerce and political life rose among the people ; and the danger of the people being divided into three "castes," if it ever existed in Europe, passed away once and for ever.

The simple origin of the caste institution as narrated above is obscured in later Hindu literature in a cloud of strange myths and legends. But in spite of such wonderful legends, later Hindu writers never completely lost sight of the fact that caste was originally only a distinction based on professions. And this simple and natural account of the origin of caste often occurs in the same Puranic works which elsewhere delight in strange and monstrous myths about the origin of the institution. We have room only for one or two extracts.

In the Vayu Purana we are told that in the first or Krita Age, *there were no castes*, and that subsequently Brahma established divisions among men *according to their works*. "Those of them who were suited for command and prone to deeds of violence, he appointed to be Kshatriyas, from their protecting others. Those disinterested men who attended upon them, spoke the truth, and declared the Veda aright, were Brahmans. Those of

them who formely were feeble, engaged in the work of husbandmen, tillers of the earth, and industrious, were Vaisyas, cultivators and providers of subsistence. Those who were cleansers and ran about on service, and had little vigour or strength, were called Sudras." Accounts more or less similar to this occur in the other Puranas also.

The Ramayana in its present shape is, as we have seen before, the work of later ages. In the Uttara Kanda, chapter 74, we are told that in the Krita Age Brahmans alone practised austerities : that in the Treta Age, Kshatriyas were born *and then was established the modern system of four castes*, Reduced from mythical to historical language, the above account may be read thus :—in the Vedic Age, the Hindu Aryans were a united body and practised Hindu rites. In the Epic Age, however, priests and kings separated themselves as distinct castes, and the people also formed themselves into the lower orders, the Vaisyas and Sudras.

The Mahabharata also, as we have seen before, is in its present shape a work of later ages, but here also we occasionally meet with a sensible and honest attempt to account for caste. In the Santi Parva, section 188, we are told that "red-limbed twice-born men who were fond of sensual pleasure, fiery, irascible, daring and forgetful of their sacrificial duties, fell into the caste of Kshatriyas. Yellow twice-born men, who derived their livelihood from cows and agriculture, and did not practise religious performances, fell into the caste of Vaisyas. Black twice-born men who were impure and addicted to violence and lying, and were covetous and subsisted by all kinds of works, fell into the caste of Sudras. *Being thus separated by these their works, the twice-born men become of other castes.*"

The composers of these and similar passages no doubt knew of the legend of the four castes springing from four members of Brahma's body ; they ignored it, and treated it as an allegory, which it is. They maintain that in the earliest age there were no castes, and they make a very fair and sensible conjecture that castes were developed in a later age from distinctions in work and professions. We must now, however, return from this digression, and examine the caste-system as it prevailed in the Epic Period.

As we have stated before, the caste-system first formed itself among the peaceful citizens of Gangetic India ; it never should be forgotten, however, that the worst results of that system did not appear, and could not appear, until the Hindus had ceased to be a free nation. In the Epic Period the body of the people were still entitled to acquire religious knowledge and learning, and to perform religious rites, just like Brahmins and Kshatriyas. And even intermarriage between Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas was allowed under certain restrictions. However much, therefore, the historian of Ancient India may deplore the commencement of the caste-system, he should never forget that the worst results of that system were unknown in India until after the Mahomedan conquest.

In the sixteenth chapter of the White Yajur Veda we meet with the names of various professions which throw some light on the state of society at the time the chapter was compiled. It is apparent, however, the list is one of different professions, not of different castes. Thus, various kinds of thieves are enumerated in Kandikas, 20 and 21, and horsemen, charioteers, and infantry are spoken of in 26. Similarly the carpenter, the chariot-maker, the potter, and the blacksmith, mentioned in 27, also formed different professions, and not castes. The Nishada and others, also mentioned in the same Kandika, were obviously aboriginal tribes, who, then as now, formed the lowest strata of Hindu society.

The list is very much much enlarged in the 30th chapter of the same work, which, as we have seen before, is of a considerably later date, and indeed belongs to the *Khila* or the supplement. But here, too, we meet with many names which indicate professions only, and many others which undoubtedly refer to the aborigines ; and we find no evidence that the mass of the Vaisya population had been divided into sub-castes. We find names of dancers, orators, and frequenters in assemblies ; of chariot-makers, carpenters, potters, jewellers, cultivators, arrow-makers, and bow-makers ; of dwarfs and crookedly formed men, and blind and deaf persons ; of physicians and astronomers ; of keepers of elephants, horses, and cattle ; of servants, cooks, gate-keepers, and wood-cutters ; of painters and engravers ; of washermen, dyers, and barbers ; of learned

men and proud men and women of various descriptions ; of tanners, fishermen, hunters and fowlers ; of goldsmiths and merchants and men with various diseases ; of wig-makers and poets and musicians of various kinds. It is plain that this is not a list of castes. On the other hand, the Magadha and Suta and Bhimala and Mrigayu and Svanin and Nishada, and Durmada, and others mentioned in the list, are clearly aborigines, living under the shadow of the Aryan society. We have only to add that the same list, with slight modifications, is given in the Taittiriya Brahmana.

The above lists throw some light on the state of the society and the professions which were recognised in the period of which we speak ; but they have nothing to do with caste. Throughout the Epic Period, and throughout the succeeding periods almost to the time of the Mahommedan conquest, the great body of the Aryan people were Vaisyas, although they followed numerous professions. Along with the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas they formed the Aryan nation, and were entitled to all the rights and privileges and the literary and religious heritages of the nation. The conquered aborigines, who formed the Sudra caste, were alone debarred from the heritage of the Aryans.

This is the cardinal distinction between the ancient caste-system, and the caste-system of the present age. Caste reserved some privileges for priests, and some privileges for warriors, in ancient times ; but *never divided and disunited the Aryan people*. Priests and warriors and citizens, though following their hereditary professions from generation to generation, felt that they were one nation and one race, received the same religious instructions, attended the same schools of learning, possessed the same literature and traditions, ate and drank together, intermarried and intermixed in all respects, and were proud to call themselves the Aryan race as against the conquered aborigines. Caste in modern times has cut up the Aryan people, the Vaisyas, into scores of communities, has opened the wide gulf of race distinctions among these different communities, has interdicted marriage and social communion among them, has starved the entire body of the

people of religious knowledge and literature, and has degraded them to the rank of Sudras.

There are numerous passages in the Brahmana literature which show that the distinctions between the castes were by no means so rigid in the early times as at a later period. A remarkable passage, for instance, occurs in the Aitareya Brahmana (VII, 29). When a Kshatriya eats at a sacrifice the portion assigned for Brahmans, his progeny has the characteristics of a Brahman "ready to take gifts, thirsty after drinking Soma, and hungry of eating food, and ready to roam about everywhere according to pleasure." And *"in the second or third generations he is capable of entering completely the Brahmanship."* When he eats the share of Vaisyas his "offspring will be born with the characteristic of Vaisyas, paying taxes to another king ;" and in the second or third degree they are capable of entering the caste of Vaisyas." When he takes the share of Sudras, his progeny "will have the characteristic of Sudras ; they are to serve the three higher castes, to be expelled and beaten according to the pleasure of their masters." And "in the second or third degree, he is capable of entering the condition of Sudras."

In a previous chapter we have seen that Janaka, king of the Videhas, imparted to Yajnavalkya learning unknown to the priest before, and was thenceforward considered a Brahman (Satapatha Brahmana, XI, 6, 2, 1) In Aitareya Brahmana (II, 19), we are told of Kavasha, the son of Ilusha, whom the other Rishis expelled from a sacrificial session, saying, "How should the son of a slave girl, a gamester, who is no Brahman, remain among us and become initiated ! But Kavasha knew the gods and all the gods knew him, and he was admitted as a Rishi. Similarly, in the beautiful legend of Satyakama Jabala in the Chhandogya Upanishad (IV, 4,) is exemplified the fact that truth and learning opened out in those days a path to the highest honour and to the highest caste. The legend is so beautiful in its simplicity and its poetry, that we feel no hesitation in quoting a portion of it :—

"1. Satyakama, the son of Jabala, addressed his mother and said : 'I wish to become a Brahmacharin (religious student), mother. Of what family am I ?'

"2. She said to him : 'I do not know, my child, of what family thou art. In my youth when I had to move about much as a servant, I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama ; say that thou art Satyakana Jabala.'"

"3. He, going to Gautama Haridrumata, said to him : 'I wish to become a Brahmacharin with you, sir. May I come to you, sir?'

"4. He said to him : 'Of what family are you, my friend?' He replied : 'I do not know, sir, of what family I am. I asked my mother, and she answered—"In my youth when I had to move about much as a servant, I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama. I am therefore Satyakma Jabala, sir.'"

"5. He said to him : 'No one but a true Brahman would thus speak out. Go and fetch fuel, friend ; I shall initiate you. You have not swerved from the truth.'"

And this truth-loving young man was initiated, and, according to the custom of the times, went out to tend his teacher's cattle. In time he learnt the great truths which nature, and even the brute creation, teach those whose minds are open to instruction. Yes, he learned truths from the bull of the herd that he was tending, from the fire that he had lighted, and from a flamingo and a diver-bird which flew near him, when in the evening he had penned his cows and laid wood on the evening fire, and sat behind it. The young student then came back to his teacher, and his teacher at once said : "Friend, you shine like one who knows Brahman : who then has taught you?" "Not men," was the young student's reply. And the truth which the young student had learnt, though clothed in the style of the period, was that the four quarters, and the earth, the sky, the heaven and the ocean, and the sun, the moon, the lighting and the fire, and the organs and minds of living beings, yea the whole universe, was Brahman or God.

Such is the teaching of the Upanishads, and such are the poetical legends in which the teaching is clothed, as we shall see further on. A legend like that of Satyakama Jabala, which is full of human feeling and pathos and the highest moral lessons, cheers and refreshes the student after he has waded through pages

of the dry and meaningless dogmas and rituals of the Brahmanas. But our purpose in quoting the legend here is to show that the rules of caste had not become yet rigid when such legends were composed. We find in the legend that the son of a servant girl, who did not know his own father, became a religious student simply through his love of truth, learnt the lessons which nature and the learned men of the time could teach him, and subsequently became classed among the wisest religious teachers of the time. Surely the caste-system of that ancient time must have been freedom itself compared to the narrow system of later times, when the entire nation except the priests was cruelly debarred from religious knowledge,—that knowledge which is the food of a nation's mind, and the life of a nation's life.

It was in the Epic Period that the sacrificial cord *Yajnopavita* came into use. We are told in the *Satapatha Brahmana* (II, 4, 2) that when all beings came to *Prajapati*, the gods and the fathers came, wearing the sacrificial cord. And we are told in *Kaushitaki Upanishad* (II,7) that the all-conquering *Kaushitaki* adores the sun when rising, having put on the sacrificial cord.

The *Yajnopavita* was worn in this ancient period by Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas alike, but only at the time of performing *Yajna* or Vedic sacrifice.

Things have changed since those ancient times. The *Yajnopavita* is now habitually and ostentatiously worn at all times, by the members of one caste only—the Brahmins—and that caste has forgotten to perform Vedic *Yajna* !

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL LIFE

The great distinctions, then, between the society of the Vedic times and the society of the Epic Period was that the caste-system was unknown in the former, and had grown up in the latter. But this was not the only distinction. Centuries of culture and progress had their influence on society, and the cultured Hindus of the Epic Period were as widely different in their social manners from the warrior-cultivators of the Vedic Period, as the Greek of the time of Pericles were different from the Greeks of the time of Agamemnon and Ulysses.

The Hindus of the period of which we are speaking had attained a high degree of refinement and civilisation, and had developed minute rules to regulate their domestic and social duties. Royal courts were the seats of learning, and the learned and wise of all nations were invited, honoured, and rewarded. Justice was administered by learned officers, and laws regulated every duty of life. Towns, with their strong walls and beautiful edifices, multiplied among all nations, and had their Judges, their executive officers, and their police. Agriculture was fostered, and the king's officers looked to the collection of taxes and the comforts of cultivators.

We have said that the courts of enlightened and learned kings, like those of the Videhas, the Kasis, and the Kuru-Panchalas, were the principal seats of learning in those times. Learned priests were retained in such courts for the performance of sacrifices, and also for the purpose of the cultivation of learning; and many of the Brahmanas which have been handed down to us, were composed in the schools which those priests founded. On great occasions men of learning came from distant towns and villages, and discussions were held not only on ritualistic matters, but on such subjects as the human mind, the destination of the soul after death, the future world, the nature of the gods, the fathers, and the different orders of being, and lastly, on the nature of that Universal Being who has manifested himself in all the works we see.

But learning was not confined to royal courts. There were Parishads or Brahmanic establishments for the cultivation of learning, answering to the Universities of Europe, and young men went to these Parishads to acquire learning. Thus in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad VI, 2. we learn that Svetaketu went to the Parishads of the Panchalas for his education. Max Muller, in his History of Sanscrit Literature, quotes passages which show that, according to modern writers, a Parishad ought to consist of twenty-one Brahmans well versed in philosophy, theology, and law ; but these rules, as he points out, are laid down in later law books, and do not describe the character of the Parishads of the Epic Period. Parasara says that four, or even three, able men from amongst the Brahmans in a village, who know the Veda and keep the sacrificial fire, form a Parishad.

Besides these Parishads, individual teachers established what would be called private schools in Europe, and often collected round themselves students from various parts of the country. These students lived with their teachers, served them in a menial capacity during the time of their studentship, and after twelve years or longer, made suitable presents to their teachers and returned to their homes and their longing relatives. Learned Brahmans too, who retired to forests in their old age, often collected students round them, and much of the boldest speculations of this period has proceeded from these sylvan and retired seats of sanctity and learning. Such is the way in which learning has been cultivated and preserved during thousands of years among the Hindus, a nation who valued learning and knowledge perhaps more than any other nation in ancient or modern times. Good works and religious rites lead, according to the Hindu creed, to happier states of life and to their due reward ; but true knowledge alone leads to final union with God.

When students had thus acquired the traditional learning of the age either in Parishads or under private teachers, they returned to their homes, married, and settled down as householders. With marriage began their duties as householders, and the first duty of a householder was to light the sacrificial fire under an auspicious constellation, to offer morning and

evening libations of milk to the fire, to perform other religious and domestic rites, and above all, to offer hospitality to strangers. The essence of a Hindu's duties are inculcated in passages like the following :—

“Say what is true ! Do thy duty ! Do not neglect the study of the Veda ! After having brought to thy teacher the proper reward, do not cut off the lives of children ! Do not swerve from duty ! Do not neglect what is useful ! Do not neglect greatness ! Do not neglect the learning and teaching of the Veda !

Do not neglect the works due to the gods and fathers ! Let thy mother be to thee like unto a god ! Let thy father be to thee like unto a god ! Let thy teacher be to thee like unto a god ! Whatever actions are blameless, those should be regarded, not others. Whatever good works have been performed, by us, those should be observed by thee” (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, 1, 2).

Pleasing pictures of a happy state of society are presented in many passages which we meet within the literature of the period : “May the Brahmans in our kingdom,” says the priest at a horse-sacrifice, “live in piety ; may our warriors be skilled in arms and mighty ; may our cows yield us profuse milk, our bullocks carry their weights, and our horses be swift ; may our women defend their homes, and our warriors be victorious ; may our youths be refined in their manners.....May Parjanya shower rain in every home and in every region ; may our crops yield grains and ripen, and we attain our wishes and live in bliss” (*White Yajur Veda*, XXII, 12).

The wealth of rich men consisted in gold and silver and jewels ; in cars, horses, cows, mules and slaves ; in houses and fertile fields, and even in elephants (*Chhandogya Upanishad*, V, 13, 17, and 19 ; VII, 24 ; *Satapatha Brahmana*, III, 2, 48 ; *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 1, 5, 12, &c., &c.). Gold is considered a proper gift at sacrifice, the gift of silver being strictly prohibited. The reason is sufficiently grotesque, as the reason given in the *Brahmanas* generally are : When the gods claimed back the goods deposited with Agni, he wept, and the tears he shed became silver ; and hence if silver is given as *dakshina*, there will be weeping in the house ! The reason scarcely veils

higher faith than loyalty to the king. Householders and citizens had their possessions and wealth in gold, silver and jewels ; in cars, horses, mules, and slaves ; and in the fields surrounding the town. They kept the sacred fire in every respectable household, honoured guests, lived according to the law of the land, offered sacrifices with the help of Brahmans, and honoured knowledge. Every Aryan boy was sent to school at an early age. Brahmans and Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were educated together, learnt the same lessons and the same religion, and returned home, married, and settled down as householders. Priests and soldiers were a portion of the people, intermarried with the people, and ate and drank with the people. Various classes of manufacturers supplied the various wants of a civilised society, and followed their ancestral professions from generation to generation, but were not cut up into separate castes. Agriculturists lived with their herds and their ploughs in their own villages, and according to the ancient custom of India, Hindu village communities managed and settled their own village concerns. The picture of ancient life can be indefinitely enlarged ; but each reader will probably do this for himself. We will turn from this general account of ancient society to examine the position which women held in that society.

We have seen that the absolute seclusion of women was unknown in ancient India. Hindu women held an honoured place in society from the dawn of Hindu civilisation four thousand years ago ; they inherited and possessed property ; they took a share in sacrifices and religious duties ; they attended great assemblies on state occasions ; they openly frequented public places ; they often distinguished themselves in science and in the learning of their times ; and they even had their legitimate influence on politics and administration. And although they never mixed so freely in the society of men as women do in modern Europe, yet absolute seclusion and restraint were not Hindu customs ; they were unknown in India till the Mahomedan times, and are to this day unknown in parts of India like the Maharashtra, where the rule of the Moslems was brief. No ancient nation held their women in higher honour than the Hindus, but the Hindus have been

misjudged and wronged by writers unacquainted with their literature, and who received their notions of the women of the East from Turkish and Arab customs.

Innumerable passages could be quoted from the Brahmana literature, showing the high esteem in which women were held, but we will content ourselves with one or two. The first is the celebrated conversation between Yajnavalkya and his learned wife Maitreyi on the eve of his retirement into forests :—

"1. Now when Yajnavalkya was going to enter upon another state, he said : "Maitreyi, verily I am going away from this my house. Forsooth let me make a settlement between thee and Katyayani."

"2. Maitreyi said : "My Lord, if this whole earth full of wealth belonged to me, tell me, should I be immortal by it ?" "No," replied Yajnavalkya ; "like the life of rich people will be thy life. But there is no hope of immortality by wealth ?"

"3. And Maitreyi said : "What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal ? What my lord knoweth of immortality, tell that to me ?"

"4. Yajnavalkya replied : "Thou who art truly dear to me, thou speakest dear words. Come, sit down, I will explain it to thee, and mark well what I say."

And then he explained the principle which is so often and so impressively taught in the Upanishads, that the Universal Soul dwells in the husband, in the wife, in the sons, and in wealth ; in the Brahmans and Kshatriyas, and in all the worlds : in the Devas, in all living creatures, yea, in all the universe. Maitreyi,—the wise, the accomplished, the learned lady—received and grasped this great truth, and valued it more than all the wealth of the world (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*).

Our next quotation, which is also from the same Upanishad, relates to a great assembly of learned men in the court of Janaka, king of the Videhas :—

"Janaka Vedeha sacrificed with a sacrifice at which many presents were offered to the priests of (the Asvamedha). Brahmans of the Kurus and the Panchalas had come thither, and Janaka wished to know which of those Brahmans was the best read. So he enclosed a thousand cows, and ten padas (of gold) were fastened to each pair of horns.

"And Janaka spoke to them : 'Ye venerable Brahmans, he who among you is the wisest, let him drive away these cows.' Then those Brahmans durst not, but Yajnavalkya said to his pupil. 'Drive them away, my dear.' He replied, 'O glory of the Saman !' and drove them away."

On this the Brahmans became angry, and plied the haughty priest Yajnavalkya with questions, but Yajnavalkya was a match for them all. Asvala the Hotri priest, Jaratkarava Artabhaga, Bhujyu Lahyayani, Ushasta Chakrayana, Kahola Kaushitakeya, Uddalaka Aruni, and others plied Yajnavalkya with questions, but Yajnavalkya was not found wanting ; the learned men, one by one, held their peace.

There was one in the great assembly—and this is a remarkable fact which throws light on the manners of the time—who was not deficient in the learning and the priestly lore of those times, because she was a lady. She rose in the open assembly, and said : "O Yajnavalkya, as the son of a warrior from the Kasis or Videhas might string his loosened bow, take two pointed foe-piercing arrows in his hand and rise to battle, I have risen to fight thee with two questions. Answer me these questions." The questions were put and were answered, and Gargi Vachaknavi was silent.

Do not these passages and such passages as these indicate that women were honoured in ancient India, more perhaps than among any other ancient nations in the face of the globe ? Considered as the intellectual companions of their husbands, as their affectionate helpers in the journey of life, and as the inseparable partners of their religious duties, Hindu wives received the honour and respect due to their position. They also had their rights to property and to inheritance, which indicate the regard in which they were held. It would be scarcely fair to compare ancient customs with the institutions of moderns civilisation ; but the historian of India, who has studied the literature of the ancient Hindus, will have no hesitation in asserting that never in the most polished days of Greece or Rome were women held in such high regard in those countries as in India three thousand years ago,

As we have said before, early marriage and child marriage were still unknown in the Epic Period, and we have numerous

allusions, in the Epics and elsewhere, to the marriage of girls at a proper age. Widow-marriage was not only not prohibited, but there is distinct sanction for it; and the rites which the widow had to perform before she entered into the married state again are distinctly laid down. As caste was still a pliable institution, men belonging to one caste not unoften married widows of another, and Brahmans married widows of other castes without any scruple. "And when a woman has had ten former husbands, not Brahmans, if a Brahman then marries her, it is he alone who is her husband" (*Artharva Veda*, V, 17, 8).

Polygamy was allowed among the Hindus as among many other ancient nations, but was confined to kings and wealthy lords as a rule. Modern readers, who would judge harshly of ancient Hindu civilisation from the prevalence of this custom, should remember that polygamy was nearly universal among the wealthy people of all nations in ancient times, and that, to take some instances, Alexander the Great and his successors Lysimachus, Seleucus, Ptolemy, Demetrius, and others were all polygamists! Polyandry, we need hardly say, was unknown in Aryan India: "For one man has many wives, but one wife has not many husbands at the same time" (*Aitareya Brahmana*, III, 23).

There is in the *Satapatha Brahmana* (I, 8, 3, 6) a curious passage prohibiting marriages among blood relations to the third or fourth generation: "Hence from one and the same spring both the enjoyer (the husband) and the one to be enjoyed (the wife);" "for now kinsfolk live sporting and rejoicing together, saying, in the fourth or third generation we unite." The rule of prohibition became more strict in later times.

Women in India have ever been remarkable for their faithfulness and their dutiful affection towards their husbands, and female unfaithfulness is comparatively rare. It would appear that Hindu priests, like Roman Catholic priests, found a way to discover the most hidden secrets of frail women, and the following reads like a rule of Catholic confessional:—

"Thereupon the *Pratiprasthatri* returns to the place where the sacrificer's wife is seated. When he is about to lead the wife away, he asks her: 'With whom holdest thou intercourse?' Now when a woman who belongs to one man carries

on intercourse with another, she undoubtedly commits a sin against Varuna. He therefore asks her, lest she should sacrifice with a secret pang in her mind ; for when confessed, the sin becomes less, since it becomes truth : this way he thus asks her. And whatever connection she confesses not, that indeed will turn out injurious to the relatives" (*Satapatha, Brahmana*, II, 5, 2, 20),

CHAPTER VII

LAW, ASTRONOMY AND LEARNING

The punishment of criminals and the proper administration of laws are foundations on which all civilised societies are built, and we find a true appreciation of laws in some passages in the Brahmana literature : "Law is the kshatra (power) of the Kshatra, therefore there is nothing higher than the law. Thenceforth even a weak man rules a stronger with the help of the law as with the help of a king. Thus the law is what is called the true. And if a man declares what is true, they say he declares the law ; and if he declares the law, they say he declares what is true. Thus both are the same" (*Brihadaranyaka*, I, 4, 14). No nobler definition of law has been discovered by all the jurists in the world.

The judicial procedure was still however crude, and, as among other ancient nations, criminals were often tried by the order of fire.

"They bring a man hither whom they have taken by the hand, and they say : 'He has taken something, he has committed theft.' (When he denies, they say) : 'Heat the hatchet for him,' If he committed the theft, then he.....grasps the heated hatchet, he is burnt, and he is killed. But if he did not commit the theft, then he.....grasps the heated hatchet, he is not burnt, and he is delivered." (*Chhandogya*, VI, 16), Murder, theft, drunkenness, and adultery are considered the most heinous offences.

We will now turn to Astronomy. The first elementary knowledge of the astronomical science is discernible in the Rig Veda itself. The year was divided into twelve lunar months and a thirteenth or intercalary month was added to adjust the lunar with solar year (I, 25, 8). The six seasons of the year were named Madhu, Madhava, Sukra, Suchi, Nabha, and Nabhasya, and were connected with different gods (II, 36). The different phases of the moon were observed and were personified as deities. Raka is the full moon, Sinivali is the last day before the new moon, and Gungu is the new moon (II, 32).

The position of the moon with regard to the Nakshatras or the lunar mansions is also alluded to (VIII, 3, 20), and some of the constellations of the lunar mansions are also named in X, 85, 13. It would appear from this that the Nakshatras were observed and named in the Vedic Age, and it was in the Epic Period that the lunar zodiac was finally settled.

As might be expected, there was a considerable progress made in Epic Period. Astronomy had now come to be regarded as a distinct science, and astronomers by profession were called Nakshatra Darsa and Ganaka (Taittiriya Brahmana, IV, 5, and White Yajur Veda, XXX, 10, 20). The twenty-eight lunar mansions are also enumerated in the Black Yajur Veda, and a second and later enumeration occurs in the Atharva Sanhita and in the Taittiriya Brahmana. An interesting passage in Satapatha Brahmana (II, 1, 2) shows how sacrificial rites were regulated by the position of the moon in reference to these lunar asterisms. It is too long to be quoted, and we will therefore give extracts :—

"1. He may set up two fires under the *Krittikas* (the pleiades), for they, the *Krittikas*, are doubtless Agni's asterism. ...

"6. He may also set up his fires under *Rohini*. For under *Rohini* it was that Prajapati, when desirous of progeny, set up his fires,...

"8. He may also set up his fires under the asterism or *Mrigasirsha*. For *Mrigasirsha*, indeed, is the head Prajapati.... He may also set up his fires under the *Phalgunis*. They, the *Phalgunis*, are Indra's asterism, and even correspond to him in name ; for, indeed, Indra is also called Arjuna, this being his mystic name ; and the (*Phalgunis*) are also called *Arjunis*....

"12. Let him set up his fire under the asterism *Hasta*, whosever should wish that presents should be offered him : then indeed that will take place forthwith ; for whatever is offered with the hand (*hasta*), that indeed is given to him.

"13. He may also set up his fires under *Chitra*," &c., &c.

It will thus appear that the setting up of the sacrificial fires was regulated by the constellations. In the same way, sacrifices lasting for a year were regulated by the sun's annual course. Martin Haug, the editor and translator of the

Aitareya Brahmana, has made some excellent remarks on this subject, which deserve to be quoted :—

“The great sacrifices take place generally in spring in the months *Chaitra* and *Vaisakha* (April and May). The *Sattras*, which lasted for a year, were, as one may learn from a careful perusal of the fourth book of the Aitareya Brahmana, nothing but an imitation of the sun’s yearly course. They were divided into two distinct parts, each consisting of six months of thirty days each ; in the midst of both was the Vishuvan, i, e., equator or central day, cutting the whole *Sattra* into two halves. The ceremonies were in both the halves exactly the same ; but they were in the latter half performed in an inverted order. This represents the increase of the days in the northern and their decrease in the southern progress ; for both increase and decrease take place exactly in the same proportions” (*Introduction*, p. 47).

We have said that the lunar zodiac was finally arranged in India towards the commencement of the Epic Period, say, B. C. 1400. The illustrious Colebrooke first stated his opinion that the Hindus arranged the lunar mansions from their own observations, and later researches into the intimate connection between the Vedic rites and the position of the moon with regard to the stars, leave no doubt whatever as to the indigenous origin of Hindu astronomy. But nevertheless some European scholars have indulged in conjectures as to the foreign origin of Hindu astronomy, and a controversy which may really be called a battle of books has raged in Europe and America.

The eminent French savant Biot, writing in 1860, described the Chinese system of *Sieu* as an indigenous Chinese institution, and the inference was that the Hindu *Nakshatras* and Arab *Manazil* were borrowed from the Chinese. The German scholar Lassen was led to adopt this opinion. Weber, however, took up the subject, and in two elaborate essays, published in 1860 and 1861, proved that the Chinese *Sieu* as well as the Arab *Manazil*, in respect of order, number, identity of limiting stars and inequality of distance, correspond to one of the most modern phases of the Hindu *Nakshatras*, prior to which these have their own peculiar history of development.”

Weber thus finally disposed of the theory of the Chinese origin of the *Nakshatras*, and further proves that the Arab lunar mansions were imported by the Arabs from India, And this is exactly the conclusion to which Colebrooke had arrived as far back as 1807, when he wrote that the Hindus had an ecliptic, "seemingly their own: it was certainly borrowed by the Arabians."

Having thus finally disposed of the Chinese and Arabian theories, Weber must needs start a theory of his own, which we may call the Chaldean theory! He conjectures that the Hindu system may have been derived from some foreign source, probably Babylon. This is nothing but a conjecture, a mere suspicion, for Assyrian scholars have not yet obtained any trace of a lunar zodiac among the archives of old Babylonian learning; but Whitney of America supports this "suspicion," as he calls it, because he thinks the Hindus "were not a people of such habits of mind" as to make observations in the heavens and settle the lunar zodiac. The argument is so amusing that the learned scholar almost withdraws it himself, stating that the argument "is not of a character to compel belief."

When scholars condescend to such wild reasoning, it is idle to pursue the controversy. We will therefore conclude this subject with a passage in which Max Muller puts forward the common sense view of the subject. "The 27 *Nakshatras*, or the 27 constellations which were chosen in India as a kind of lunar zodiac, were supposed to have come from Babylon. Now the Babylonian zodiac was solar, and in spite of repeated researches, no trace of a lunar zodiac has been found, where so many things have been found, in the cuneiform inscriptions. But supposing even that a lunar zodiac had been discovered in Babylon. no one acquainted with Vedic literature, and the ancient Vedic ceremonial, would easily allow himself to be persuaded that the Hindus had borrowed that simple division of the sky from the Babylonians."¹

Besides fixing the lunar zodiac, the Hindus of this period observed the solstitial points to fix the dates of momentous

¹ India: What can it teach us (1883), p. 126.

events, and divided the year into months, naming each month after the lunar constellation in which the moon was at its full in the particular month. According to Bentley the lunar zodiac was fixed in 1426 B. C., and the months were named in 1891 B. C.² A knowledge of the solar zodiac was borrowed from the Greeks, after the Christian era, as we will see in a subsequent book.

Besides astronomy, other branches of learning were also cultivated in the Epic Period. Thus in Chhandogya Upanishad (VII, 1, 2) we find Narada saying to Sanatkumara, "I know the Rig Veda, Sir, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda, as the fourth the Atharvana, as the fifth the Itihasa Purana, the Veda of the Vedas (grammar); the Pitrya (rules for sacrifices for the ancestors); the Rasi (the science as numbers); the Daiva (the science of portents); the Nidhi (the science of time); the Vakovakya (logic); the Ekayana (ethics); the Deva Vidya (etymology); the Brahma Vidya (pronunciation, prosody, &c.); the Bhuta Vidya (the science of demons); the Kshatra Vidya (the science of weapons); the Nakshatra Vidya (astronomy); the Sarpa Devanjana Vidya (the science of serpents and of genii). All this I know, Sir."

In Brihadaranyaka (II, 4, 10) we are told that "Rig-Veda. Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Athavangirasas, Itihasa (legends), Purana (cosmogonies), Vidya (knowledge), the Upanishads, Slokas (verses), Sutras (prose rules), Anu Vyakhyanas (glosses), Vyakhyanas (commentaries), have all been breathed forth from the Supreme Being."

Again, in the eleventh book of the Satapatha Brahmana, we have mention of the three Vedas, the Athavangirasas, the Anusasanas, the Vedyas, the Vakovakya, the Itihasa Purana, the Narasansis, and the Gathas.

Weber is of opinion that these names do not necessarily imply distinct works which existed in the Epic Period, and which have been since lost to us. He points out that many of the names merely imply the different subjects which we will still find in the Brahmanas. It was at a later age, in the Rationalist Period, that these different subjects

² Hindu Astronomy (London, 1825), pp. 3 and 10.

which we find interwoven in the Brahmanas and Upanishads branches out as separate subjects of study, and were taught in the separate Sutra works and compositions which have come down to us.

There is some force in this supposition, but, at the same time, many of the subjects enumerated above could scarcely have been taught properly and handed down from teacher to pupil without the help of special works on those subjects. We therefore believe that such separate works existed in the Epic Period, which have been lost to us, because they have been replaced by more elaborate and scientific works of a later age on the same subjects.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SACRIFICIAL RITES OF THE BRAHMANAS

The main feature which distinguishes the religion of the Epic Period from that of preceding age is the great importance which came to be attached to *sacrifice*. In the earlier portion of the Vedic Period, men composed hymns in praise of the most imposing manifestations of nature ; they deified these various natural phenomena, and they worshipped these deities under the name of Indra or Varuna, of Agni or the Maruts. And the worship took the shape of sacrifice, *i. e.*, the offering of milk or grain, of animals or libations of the Soma-juice to the gods.

A gradual change, however, is perceptible towards the close of the Vedic Age, and in the Epic Age sacrifice as such,—the mere forms and ceremonials and offerings, —had acquired such an abnormal importance, that everything else was lost in it. This was inevitable when the priests formed into a caste. They multiplied ceremonials, and attached the utmost importance to every minute rite, until both they and the worshippers almost lost sight of the deities they worshipped in the voluminous rites they performed.

Sacrifices were generally accompanied by gifts of cattle, gold, garments, and food, and by the offering of animals as victims. There is a curious passage in Satapatha Brahmana, 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8, about animal sacrifice, which deserves to be quoted :—

“At first, namely, the gods offered up a man as a victim. When he was offered up, the sacrificial essence went out of him. It entered into the horse. They offered up the horse. When it was offered, the sacrificial essence went out of it. It entered into the ox. When it was offered up, the sacrificial essence went out of it. It entered into the sheep. They offered up the sheep. When it was offered up, the sacrificial essence went out of it. It entered into the goat. They offered up the goat. When it was offered up, the sacrificial essence went out of it. It entered into this earth. They searched for it by digging.

They found it in the shape of those two substances, the rice and barley : therefore even now they obtain those two by digging ; and as much efficacy as all those sacrificed animal victims would have for him, so much efficacy has this oblation (of rice, &c.) for him who knows this.”

Max Muller infers from this passage that human sacrifice prevailed among the ancient Hindus, not in the Epic Period, not even in the Vedic Period, but at a still remoter age. Rajendra Lala Mitra, we regret to observe, follows the lead of Max Muller, and infers from certain other passages which he quotes from the literature of this period, that the inhuman custom prevailed in the remote past. We demur to the conclusions of both these scholars.

If human sacrifice had prevailed in India before the Rig Veda hymns were composed, we should certainly have found allusions to it in the hymns themselves—allusions far more frequent than we find in the later Brahmana literature. We find no such allusions. The story of Sunahsepha, as told in the Rig Veda, is no evidence of human sacrifice. And there is absolutely nothing else in the Rig Veda which can be construed as evidence of this custom. It is impossible to suppose that such a striking and fearful custom should have existed and gradually fallen into disuse without leaving the slightest trace in the Vedic hymns, some of which have come down from a very ancient date.

And where do we find allusions to this custom in the literature of the Epic Period ? The Sama Veda is compiled from the Vedic hymns, and of course there is no mention of human sacrifice in this Veda. There is no mention of the custom in the Black Yajur Veda, and there is no mention of it in the White Yajur Veda, properly so-called. It is in the very latest compositions of the Epic period,—in the *khila* or supplementary portion of the White Yajur Veda, in the Brahmana of the Black Yajur Veda, in the Aitareya Brahmana of the Rig Veda, and the last but one book of the Satapatha Brahmana, that we have accounts of human sacrifice. Is it possible to postulate the existence of a horrible custom in India in the remote past of which we find no mention in the Rig Veda, in the Sama Veda, in the Black or White Yajur Veda, but the

memory of which suddenly revived after a thousand years in the supplements and Brahmanas of the Vedas? Or is it not far more natural to suppose that all the allusions to human sacrifice in the later compositions of the Epic Period are the speculations of priests, just as there are speculations about the sacrifice of the Supreme Being Himself? If the priests needed any suggestion, the customs of the non-Aryan tribes with whom they become familiar in the Epic Period would yield that suggestion.

We will now give a brief account of the principal sacrifices which were performed in this ancient age. We know from the Yajur Veda what these sacrifices were.

The *Darasa purnamasa* was performed on the first day after the full and new moon, and Hindus down to the present time consider these days as sacred. The *Pindapitri yajna* was a sacrifice to the departed ancestors, and is one of the few ancient sacrifices which are performed to this day.

The *Agni hotra* was the daily libations of milk to the sacred fire, performed morning and evening. And the *Chaturmasya* was a sacrifice which was performed only once every four months.

The *Agni shtoma* was a Soma sacrifice; while the *Sautramani* was originally an expiation for over-indulgence in in Soma. The *Raja suya* was the imperial coronation sacrifice which was performed by great kings after they had established their prowess and fame by conquests; and the *Asva medha* was the celebrated horse-sacrifice which was also performed after great wars and conquests. Humbler than these, but far more important for our purpose, was the *Agniadhana* or setting up of the sacrificial fires, which had an important bearing on the life of every Hindu, and which deserves a few words in explanation.

Asvapati, as has been observed before, boasted that in his kingdom there was no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no ignorant person, no adulterer or adulteress, and "no man without an altar in his house." In those days, to keep the sacred fire in the altar was a duty incumbent on every householder, and the breach of this rule was regarded as positive impiety and irreligiousness. The student who had returned home from his teacher or

his Parishad married in due time, and then set up the sacrificial fires. This was generally done on the first day of the waxing moon, but sometimes also at full moon, probably to enable the newly married couple to enter on the sacred duties as early as possible. The performance of the Agniadhana, or the establishment of the sacred fires, generally required two days. The sacrificer chose his four priests, the Brahman, the Hotri, the Adhvaryu, and the Agnidhra, and erected two sheds or fire-houses, for the Garhapatya and the Ahavaniya fires respectively. A circle was marked for the Garhapatya fire, and a square for the Ahavaniya fire; and if a southern or Dakshinagni was required, a semicircular area was marked to the south of the space between the other two.

The Adhvaryu then procured temporary fire, either producing it by friction, or obtaining it from certain specified sources in the village, and after the usual five-fold lustration of the Garhapatya fire-place, he laid down the fire thereon. Towards sunset the sacrificer invoked the gods and manes. He and his wife then entered the Garhapatya house, and the Adhvaryu handed him two pieces of wood, the *Arani*, for the production of the Ahavaniya fire on the next morning. And the sacrificer and his wife laid them on their laps, performed propitiatory ceremonies, and remained awake the whole night and kept up the fire. In the morning the Adhvaryu extinguished the fire, or if there was to be a Dakshinagni, he kept it till that fire was made up. Such in brief is the ceremony of the Agniadhana, or the setting up of sacrificial fires, which formed an important duty in the life of every Hindu householder in ancient days, when the gods were worshipped by each man in his fire-place, and temples and idols were unknown.

The illustrious scholar Roth first pointed out in 1854, from a passage in the Rig Veda (X, 18, 11), that in ancient ages burial was practised by the Hindus. This custom was followed by the burning of the dead and the burial of the ashes. That this latter custom was also in vogue in the Rig Veda Period appears from other passages, such as X, 15, 14, and X, 16, 1. In the Epic Period, of which we are now speaking, the custom of burying had ceased altogether, and the dead were burnt, and the ashes were buried. We find an account

of this in the 35th chapter of the White Yajur Veda. The bones of the deceased were collected in a vessel and buried in the ground near a stream, and a mound was raised as high as the knee and covered with grass. The relatives then bathed and changed their clothes and left the funeral ground. The same ceremony is more fully described in the Aranyaka of the Black Yajur Veda. It is scarcely necessary to add that the custom which now prevails among the Hindus is simple cremation, without the burial of the ashes. This recent custom began, according to Rajendra Lala Mitra, shortly after the commencement of the Christian Era.

Another important rite which deserves some explanation is the Pindapitri yajna, or the gift of cakes to the departed ancestors. The cakes were offered to Fire and to Soma, and the Fathers were invoked to receive their shares. Then followed an address to the Fathers with reference to the six seasons of the year. The worshipper then looked at his wife and said : "Fathers you have made us domestic men—we have brought these gifts to you according to our power." Then offering a thread or wool or hair, he said : "Fathers ! this is your apparel, wear it." Then the wife ate a cake with a desire to have children, and said : "Fathers ! let a male be born in me in this season. Do you protect the son in this womb from all sickness." Departed spirits, according to the Hindu religion, receive offerings from their living descendants, and get none when the family is extinct. Hence the extreme fear of Hindus to die without male issue, and the birth or adoption of a son is a part of their religion.

We do not propose to give an account of the other sacrificial rites ; what we have already said will convey a general idea as to how sacrifices were performed. We will now turn to some of the legends of the Brahmanas, which are curious and interesting. A most remarkable legend is told of Manu, who in the Vedic hymns is alluded to as the ancient progenitor of man, who introduced cultivation and worship by fire. The legend in the Satapatha Brahmana (I, 8, 1) is not unlike the account of the Deluge in the old Testament. As Manu was washing his hands a fish came unto him and said : "Rear me, I will save thee." Manu reared it, and in time it told him "in

such and such a year that flood will come. Thou shalt then attend to me (i. e., to my advice) by preparing a ship." The flood came, and Manu entered into the ship which he had built in time, and the fish swam up to him and carried the ship beyond the northern mountain. The ship was fastened to a tree there, and as the flood subsided, Manu gradually descended. "The flood then swept away all these creatures, and Manu alone remained here."

The legends relating to the creation of the world are also interesting. There is a beautiful Vedic simile in which the Sun, pursuing the Dawn, is compared to a lover pursuing a maiden. This gave rise to the legend which is found in the Brahmanas (Satapatha, I, 7, 5; Aitereya, III, 33, &c.) that Prajapati, the supreme god, felt a passion for his daughter, and this was the origin of creation ! This legend in the Brahmanas was further developed in the Puranas, where Brahma is represented as amorous of his daughter. The whole of these monstrous legends arose from a simple metaphor in the Rig Veda about the Sun following the Dawn. That such is the origin of the Puranic fables was known to Hindu thinkers and commentators, as will appear from the following well-known argument of Kumarila, the great opponent of Buddhism, and the predecessor of Sankaracharya :—

"It is fabled that Prajapati, the Lord of Creation, did violence to his daughter. But what does it mean ? Prajapati, the Lord of Creation, is a name of the sun ; and he is called so because he protects all creatures. His daughter Ushas is the dawn. And when it is said that he was in love with her, this only means that at sunrise the sun runs after the dawn, the dawn being at the same time called the daughter of the sun because she rises when he approaches. In the same manner it is said that Indra was the seducer of Ahalya. This does not imply that the god Indra committed such a crime ; but Indra means the sun, and Ahalya the night ; and as the night is seduced and ruined by the sun of the morning, therefore is Indra called the paramour of Ahalya."

There is another legend of creation in the Taittiriya Brahmana (I, 1, 3, 5). In the beginning there was nothing except water, and a lotus leaf standing out of it. Prajapati dived in

the shape of a boar and brought up some earth and spread it out and fastened it down by pebbles. This was the earth.

A similar story is told in the Satapatha Brahmana (III, 1, 1, 8), that after the creation, the gods and asuras both sprung from Prajapati, and the earth trembled like a lotus leaf when the gods and asuras contended for mastery. We know that in the Rig Veda the word Asura is an adjective which means strong or powerful, and is invariably applied to gods except in the very last hymns of the last Mandala. In the Brahmanas the word has changed its meaning altogether, and is applied to the enemies of the gods, about whom many new legends were invented.

Another account of creation is given in the Satapatha Brahmana (II, 5, 1): "Verily in the beginning Prajapati alone existed here." He created living beings and birds and reptiles and snakes, but they all passed away for want of food. He then made the breasts in the forepart of their body (*i. e.*, of the mammals) teem with milk, and so the living creatures survived. And thus the world was originally peopled.

While thus legends and sacrificial rites multiplied in the Epic Period, religion was still the same as in the Vedic Period. The gods of the Rig Veda were still worshipped, and the hymns of the Rik, Saman, or Yajus were still uttered as texts. Only the veneration with which the gods were looked up to in the Vedic Period was now merged in the veneration for the sacrificial ceremonies.

New gods, however, were slowly finding a place in the Hindu pantheon—names which have acquired importance in later times. We have already seen that Arjuna was another name of Indra, even in the Satapatha Brahmana. In Chapter XVI of the White Yajur Veda, we find Rudra already assuming his more modern Puranic names, and acquiring a more distinct individuality. In the Rig Veda, as we have already seen, Rudra is the father of the storms, he is the thunder. In the White Yajur Veda he is also described as the thunder-cloud, but is specially represented as a fearful god, and often the god of thieves and criminals, and altogether a destructive power. He is called Girisha (because clouds rest on mountains); he is called *Tamra* or *Aruna* or *Babhru* (from

the colour of the clouds); he is named Nilakantha or blue-necked (also from the same reason); Kapardin or the long-haired; Pasupati or the nourisher of animals; Sankara or the benefactor; and Siva or the beneficent. Thus in the Epic Period we find Rudra in a transition stage, and we already see the origin of some of the Puranic legends about him. But nowhere in the Brahmana literature do we find those legends fully developed, or Rudra represented as the Puranic Siva, the consort of Durga or Kali. In the Kaushitaki Brahmana, we find great importance attached in one passage to Isana or Mahadeva. In Satapatha Brahmana, we find the following remarkable passage:—"This is thy share, O Rudra! Graciously accept it together with thy sister Ambika!" (II, 6, 2, 9). And in a celebrated passage in the Mundaka Upanishad, an Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, we find Kali, Karali, Manojava, Sulohita, Sudhumarvarna Sphulingini, and Bisvarupi as the names of the seven tongues of fire. In Satapatha Brahmana (II, 4, 4, 6), we are told of a sacrifice being performed by Daksha Parvati; and in the Kena Upanishad we find mention of a female called Uma Haimavati, who appeared before Indra and explained to Indra the nature of Brahman. These are a few specimens of the scattered materials in the Brahmana literature, out of which the gorgeous Puranic legend of Siva and his consort was reared.

In Aitareya Brahmana (VI, 15), and in Satapatha Brahmana (I, 2, 5), we are told the story of the gods obtaining from the Asuras the part of the world which Vishnu could stride over or cover, and thus they managed to get the whole world. It is in the last book of the Satapatha Brahmana (XIV, 1, 1), that Vishnu obtains a sort of supremacy among gods, and his head is then struck off by Indra. Krishna, the son of Devaki, is not yet a deity; he is a pupil of Ghora Angirasa in the Chhandogya Upanishad (III, 17, 6).

While in these scattered allusions we detect materials for the construction of the gorgeous Puranic mythology of a later day, we also find in the Epic Period traces of that disbelief in Brahmanical rites and creed which broke out also at a later day in the Buddhist revolution. The Tandya Brahmana of the Sama Veda contains the Vratya-stomas, by which the Vratyas

or *Aryans not living according to the Brahmanical system* could get admission into that community. Some of them are thus described : "They drive in open chariots of war, carry bows and lances, wear turbans, robes bordered with red and having fluttering ends, shoes, and sheep skins folded double ; their leaders are distinguished by brown robes and silver neck ornaments ; they pursue neither agriculture nor commerce ; their laws are in a state of confusion ; they speak the same language as those who have received Brahmanical consecration, but nevertheless call what is easily spoken hard to pronounce." For the rest, a Vratya was not yet looked upon with contempt, and the Supreme Being is addressed in Prasna Upanishad as a Vratya.

CHAPTER IX

THE RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES OF THE UPANISHADS

It is a relief to pass from the rituals and legends of the Brahmanas to the more vigorous speculations of the Upanishads. Some impatience appears to have been felt with the elaborate but unmeaning rites, the dogmatic but childish explanations, and the mystic but grotesque reasoning which fill the voluminous Brahmanas ; and thinking men asked themselves if this was all that religion could teach. Earnest men, while still conforming to the rites laid down in the Brahmanas, began to speculate on the destination of the Soul and on the nature of the Supreme Being. Learned Kshatriyas must have given a start to these healthier speculations, or at least carried them on with vigour and success, until Brahmins came to them to learn something of the wisdom of the new school. And even after the lapse of nearly three thousand years, it is impossible not to be struck with the vigour, the earnestness, and the philosophy which characterise the doctrines of the Upanishads. The most important among them are (1) the Doctrine of a Universal Soul, (2) the Doctrine of Creation, (3) the Doctrine of Transmigration of Souls, and (4) the Doctrine of Final Beatitude.

We begin with the Doctrine of a Universal Soul, an all-pervading Breath which is the keystone of the philosophy and thought of the Upanishads. This idea is somewhat different from monotheism as it has been generally understood in later days. For monotheism generally recognises a God and Creator as distinct from the created beings ; but the monotheism of the Upanishads, which has been the monotheism of the Hindu religion ever since, recognises God as the Universal Being :—all things else have emanated from him, are a part of him, and will mingle in him, and have no separate existence. This is the lesson which Satyakama Jabala learnt from nature, and this is the lesson which Yajnavalkya imparted to his beloved and esteemed wife Maitreyi. This too is the great idea which is taught in the Upanishads in a hundred similes and

stories and beautiful legends, which impart to the Upanishads their value in the literature of the world.

"All this is Brahman (the Universal Being). Let a man meditate on the visible world as beginning, ending, and breathing in the Brahman.

"The Intelligent, whose body is spirit, whose form is light, whose thoughts are true, whose nature is like either (omnipresent and invisible), from whom all works, all desires, sweet odours and tastes proceed ; he who embraces all this, who never speaks and is never surprised.

"He is my self within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a canary seed or the kernel of a canary seed. He also is my self within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds.

"He from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed, who embraces all this, who never speaks and is never surprised, he—my self within the heart—is that Brahman. When I shall have departed from hence, I shall obtain him" (*Chhandogya*, III, 14).

Such is the sublime language in which the ancient Hindus expressed their sublime conception of the minute but all-pervading and Universal Being whom they called Brahman or God.

We proceed with other extracts from the *Chhandogya*. Svetuketu, as we have seen before, stayed with his teacher from his twelfth year to his twenty-fourth and then returned home, "having then studied all the Vedas, conceited, considering himself well read, and stern." But he had yet things to learn which were not ordinarily taught in the schools of the age, and his father Uddalaka Aruneya taught him the true nature of the Universal Being in beautiful smiles :—

"As the bees, my son, make honey by collecting the juices of distant trees, and reduce the juice into one form. And as these juices have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that, in the same manner, my son, all those creatures, when they have become merged in the True, know not that they are merged in the True....

"These rivers, my son, run, the eastern (like the Ganges)

towards the east, the western (like the Indus) towards the west. They go from sea to sea (i.e., the clouds lift up the water from the sea to the sky and send it back as rain to the sea). They become indeed sea. And as those rivers, when they are in the sea, do not know, I am this or that river, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures, proceeding from the True, know not that they have proceeded from the True....

"Place this salt in water, and then wait on me in the morning."

"The son did as he was commanded. The father said to him: 'Bring me the salt which you placed in the water last night.' The son having looked for it found it not, for, of course, it was melted.

"The father said: 'Taste it from the surface of the water. How is it?' The son replied: 'It is salt.' 'Taste it from the middle. How is it?' The son replied: 'It is salt.' 'Taste it from the bottom, How is it?' The son replied: 'It is salt.' The father said: 'Throw it away, and then wait on me.'"

"The son waited on the father, and the father explained to his son that the Universal Being, though invisible, dwells in us, as the salt is in the water" (*Chhandogya*, VI).

These extracts from the *Chhandogya* bring home to us the Hindu idea of a Universal Being. We will now quote one or two passages from the *Kena* and the *Isa* :—

"At whose wish does the mind, sent forth, proceed on its errand?" asks the pupil. "At whose command does the first breath go forth! At whose wish do we utter this speech? What god directs the eye or the ear?"

The teacher replies: "It is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the breath of the breath, and the eye of the eye...."

"That which is not expressed by speech, and by which speech is expressed.... That which does not think by mind, and by which mind is thought.... That which does not see by the eye, and by which one sees.... That which does not hear by the ear, and by which the ear is heard.... That which does not breathe by breath, and by which breath is drawn,—that alone know as *Brahman*,—not that which people here adore" (*Kena Upanishad*, I).

The italics are, of course, ours. But who does not see in the above passage an effort of the human mind to shake itself from the trammels of meaningless ceremonials which priests taught and the "people here" practised, to soar into a higher region of thought and to comprehend the incomprehensible,—the breath of the breath and the soul of the soul? Who is not struck by this manly and fervent effort made by the Hindu nation, three thousand years ago, to know the unknown Maker, to comprehend the incomprehensible God.

And the joy of him who has comprehended, however feebly, the incomprehensible God, has been well described :—

"He who beholds all beings in the Self, and Self in all beings, he never turns away from it.

"When to a man who understands, the Self has become all things, what sorrow, what trouble can there be to him who once beheld that unity?"

"He, the Self, encircled all, bright, incorporeal, scatheless, without muscles, pure, untouched by evil, a seer, wise, omnipresent, self-existent, he disposed all things rightly for eternal years" (*Isa Upanishad*).

Lastly, in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we are told that all gods are the manifestation of Self or Purasha, "for he is all gods" (I, 4, 6). And likewise that he exists in all men, in the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra (I, 4, 15).

Our extracts on this subject have been somewhat lengthy, but the reader will not regret it. For the Doctrine of a Universal Soul is the very keystone of the Hindu religion, and it is necessary to know how this idea was first developed in India in the Upanishads. We will now pass on to another important doctrine, viz., the Doctrine of Creation.

The Creation of the world was still a mystery to these early thinkers, and the attempts to solve it were necessarily fanciful. A few passages may be quoted :—

"In the beginning this was non-existent. It became existent as it grew. It turned into an egg. The egg lay for the time of a year. The egg broke open. The two halves were one of silver, the other of gold.

"The silver one became this earth, the golden one the sky, the thick membrane (of the white) the mountains, the thin

membrane (of the yolk) the mist with the clouds, the small veins the rivers, the fluid the sea.

"And what was born from it was Aditya, the Sun. When he was born shouts of hurrah arose, and all beings arose, and all things which they desired" (*Chhandogya*, III, 19).

A different account is given in VI, 2, of the same Upanishad, where we are told that—"In the beginning there was that only which is,—One only, without a second," And that sent forth fire, and fire sent forth water, and the water sent forth the earth.

The Aitareya Aranyaka describes how Prana, the Universal Breath, created the world, and then discusses the question of the material cause out of which the world was created. As in the Rig Veda (X, 129), and as in the Jewish account of creation, water is said to be the first material cause.

"Was it water really? Was it water? Yes, all this was water indeed. The water was the root, the world was the shoot. He (the person) is the father, they (earth, fire, &c.), are the sons." Mahidasa Aitareya knew this. (II, 1, 8, 1).

Elsewhere in the same Upanishad the following account of Creation is given :—

"Verily in the beginning all this was Self,—one only. There was nothing else blinking whatsoever." And that Self sent forth the water (above the heaven), the lights which are the sky, the mortal which is the earth, and the waters under the earth, He then formed the Purusha, and the universe was produced from the Purusha.

Some of these extracts clearly recognise an original Creator,—the Breath or the Soul or the Self—and also a material cause, water or fire. We shall see hereafter how this doctrine of a Primal Soul and Primal Matter is developed in later Hindu Philosophy. We must now turn to the most important Doctrine of Transmigration of Souls. It is to the Hindus what the doctrine of Resurrection is to the Christians. And while the Christians believe that our souls will live in another sphere after death, the Hindus believe that our souls have lived in other spheres before, and will live again in other spheres after death.

The central idea is that which has been adopted as the

cardinal principle of the Hindu religion, that good acts lead to their rewards in future existences, but it is true knowledge only which leads to union with the Universal Spirit. "As here on earth, whatever has been acquired by exertion perishes, so perishes whatever is acquired for the next world by sacrifices and other good actions performed on earth. Those who depart from hence without having discovered the Self and those true desires, for them there is no freedom in all the worlds" (*Chhandogya*, VIII, 1, 6).

The doctrine of transmigration of souls is fully and beautifully explained in the Brihadaranyaka (IV, 4), and we will make an extract from that Upanishad :—

"As a caterpillar, after having reached the end of a blade of grass, and after having made another approach to another blade, draws itself together towards it, thus does the Self, after having thrown off this body, and dispelled all ignorance, and after making another approach to another body, draw itself together towards it.

"And as a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold, turns it into another newer and more beautiful shape, so does the Self, after having thrown off this body, and dispelled all ignorance, make unto himself another newer and more beautiful shape, whether it be like the Fathers, or like the Gandharvas, or like the Devas, or like Prajapati, or like Brahman, or like other beings.....

"So much for the man who desires. But as to the man who does not desire ; who, not desiring, free from desires, is satisfied in his desires, or desires the Self only, his vital spirits do not depart elsewhere ; being Brahman, he goes to Brahman. •

"And as the slough of a snake lies on an ant-hill, dead and cast away, thus lies the body ; but that disembodied immortal spirit is Brahman only, is only light."

And this brings us to the Doctrine of Final Beatitude and Salvation. There is nothing sublimer in the literature of the ancient Hindus than the passages in which they fervently recorded their hope and faith that the disembodied Soul, purified from all stains and all sins, will at last be received in